



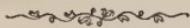
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SPRING WILD FLOWERS.





SPRING WILD FLOWERS.

By

*DANIEL WILSON, LL.D.,
Professor of History and English Literature, University
College, Toronto.*



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Preface.



LONG years ago a little volume of verse was published under the title of "Spring Wild Flowers," with the *nom de plume* of "Wil. D'Leina, Esq., of the Outer Temple," and this dedication:—

TO
JESSIE ELEANOR,
HIS INFANT DAUGHTER,
THE AUTHOR DEDICATES, VERY AFFECTIONATELY,
THIS LITTLE BUNCH OF
SPRING WILD FLOWERS
WITH THE HOPE
THAT NEITHER MAY BE NIPPED BY THE FROSTS
OF AN EARLY WINTER.

It was selected from a manuscript volume of verse and illustrative crow-quill etchings, to meet the requirements of the Publishers, for one of a series of books then in preparation under the writer's care; and having accomplished this purpose it passed out of mind.

When recent years brought round the wedding-day of the little lady to whom it had thus been dedicated, the long-forgotten volume was recalled to mind by her desire to possess a copy of a book thus specially her own. But only a mutilated one could be found ; and an appeal to the Publishers proved unavailing to supply the want. The inquiry, however, revived the memory of the long-forgotten trifle ; and now my old Publishers send me a recovered copy of the volume, with the intimation of their intention to reprint it, and a request for permission to substitute the real name of the author for that under which it first appeared.

There is an age at which most thoughtful men—and some thoughtless ones too—are prone to give utterance to their fancies in verse, without meaning thereby to assert a claim to the high rank of poet. Whether it be wise for one who has so long passed this stage to sanction in any way the reproduction of such “sins of his youth” may be doubted. But since the reproduction of them was already determined on, it seemed well to revise and rearrange the contents of the old volume, and weed it of some worthless, and of other too subjective pieces, which might suit Mr. D’Leina’s taste, but by no means commended themselves to his successor.

In this process the original title has been rendered less appropriate. But, though two or three Autumn leaves have thus been added to the old garland, the collection, as a whole, is the same bunch of wild flowers gathered long ago, “when life was in its spring.”

TORONTO, February 6, 1873.



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Prelude.



GARLAND of wild roses

*With eglantine and daisies and the like,
Some snowdrops, such as Winter oft exposes
Between the thaws wherewith she closes :
Meltings, like the regrets that strike
Amid the chill of human hearts, belike,
When passion looses.*

*A withered nosegay too,
'Twas plucked one Spring dry in the fresh green
wood ;
All laughingly the sun stole through
And quenched his thirst with cups of dew ;
Cowslip, heath, and foxglove wooed
Hands that plucked in merriest mood,
Prizing while new.*

*A few sweet violets;
The scent methinks still clings to the blue leaf;
Trifles, but yet their breath begets
Sweet memories, no heart forgets;
Even with their life so brief,
Are they not worth, at least such grief,
Knowing no regrets?*

*Some dandelions and gorse,
With a marigold or two full blown,
Gathered at the time: the things are coarse,
I own, yet this may have its force,
They took my fancy; weeds not grown
In vain, I think; or Nature had not thrown
So many o'er her course.*

*All are bound up together
With one little sprig of forget-me-not:
Alas! bright flowers so speedily wither,
And grief's so ineonstant, one knows not whether
It is not selfishness, after all,
Makes us so keenly regret their fall
Ere the wintry weather.*





The Orphan of Lowden.

A TALE OF THE REFORMATION.

A simple tale of an old man's faith ;
And a maid found faithful in love, to death,
By such trials as Holy Church sanctioneth :

Tis an old tale hath been told before ;
God grant our times have not things in store
Shall give us the like to tell once more.

Yet thanks to God that such things have been,
Since in martyr's faithfulness I ween
Faith's precursor of liberty is seen.

PART I.—THE MONK.

ARGUMENT.—*The Introduction of the Poem indicateth the period of the Tale, depicting the uncertainty of men's minds in the transition state that precedeth change. The past unrolling before the Chronicler, he describeth the scene:—An aged Monk, earnest in chase of Truth: having sought vain solace in the legends and traditions of the Church, when satiated with the pleasures of the world, and jaded by conscience to the acknowledgment of Virtue, while forsaking her allegiance, turneth his pursuit into the paths of Science, and again abandoneth the chase insatiate as before. In his vague search, the old Monk stumbleth on the Scriptures, and lo! in the despised and forgotten manuscript is found the treasure so long craved in vain: but striving to share it with others, he findeth his mission unhonoured; and the treasure, sought in long pain, and proved in gladness of heart, deemed but a vain illusion. Yet are*

there a few whom the world hath not satisfied; and one, an orphan Maid, twice desolate, by death and separation, the yearnings of whose heart find their full solace in the boundless treasury of Truth.



TALE of th' Olden Time, when mighty thoughts,
Struggling in fever-dreams of Liberty,
Awoke to war for right inalienate,

Freedom to worship God ; leaguered by doubts,
When Faith with Night grappled fearfully,
And the young Dawn, wrapt in dim mists, o'ersate :

When Conscience echoed in her inmost cave,
Not with the shrill accusing note she flings,
Startling th' affrighted soul, noon-slumbering ;—

But muttered voices, as when a summer eve
Darkens to storm, or ere the welkin rings
With the thunder's laugh, or pales 'neath its wing !

Immured in gloomy cell an old monk sate,
Poring with studious eye upon a missal,
With saintly portraiture emblazoned quaint ; .

Himself a picture, as through the narrow grate
Stole a ray, the niggard offspring of th' espousal
Of light and gloom ;—such scene as Rembrandt,

Caught by his pencil's wondrous alchemy,
Had made a gem that crowns might wrangle for.
Yet other far his studies ; he from youth

To this hoar age, within the boundary
Of Benedictine rule, hath sieved her store
Of legendary rubbish, seeking Truth !

Pent stage, whereon th' emasculated soul
Drags through unfruitful years its weary length,
Unsunned by sympathy's dear charities.

Yet, even thence, a history will unroll
Of the same soul awaking in its strength,
And, armed with God's most glorious verities,

Warring against Hell's principalities,
Leagued to uphold Night's undivided empire,
And bar her gates against besieging Light ;

Fanaticism's fierce realities
Thick mustering, too : her flag, the martyr's pyre,
God-owned, and streaming far into the night.

A noble soul it was, though long pent up
In Superstition's Gordian subtleties ;
And life's lamp far gone down in the dubious round

Of unravelling Error's skein, ere he could grope
Up to dim twilight of morn-promised skies,
And wade through learned sloughs to vantage-ground.

With energies untried—a slumbering mine,
Which yet a tiny spark may heave on high
With devastation dire,—his youth wore on :

No sun arose with influence benign
To woo the pregnant seeds to fructify,
And heavenward hore the soul, descending prone.

Cast on an evil age, when the Church saw
Man's God-resemblance to brnte-night succumb,
Yet saw uncaring, save to lend a hand

To urge him down the steep; the unwritten Law
All voiceless as the dead, and Conscience numb,
While the waked Passions sway the wide command :

He, all impetuous, blindly flung his dower
Of giant intellect adown the stream,
Gathered its harvest in,—then Conscience woke,

And, armed to reassert her slighted power,
Startled him, shuddering from his guilty dream,
To shelter in despair against her stroke !

Where shall he flee?—The mercy freely given,
Blood-bought by that Great Shepherd of the sheep,
By papal bull the Church her own declares,

Self-chartered, sole monopolist of Heaven;
With purpose doubtless to retail it cheap,
And clear the market of the devil's wares!

Nay, more: the incarnate veil, in which He bled
Who bore our sins upon the accursed tree,
And, once for all, God's justice satisfied,

By her communicable grace re-made,
Bleeds daily on her altars now, for fee,
A sacrifice to quick and dead applied.

Nor conscience scared, nor seared, will she deny
Her ready lance or salve: alike ordained
The thunderbolts to forge, or grace dispense

Fresh stamped from mint of Heaven's treasury;
And furnishing with licenses to vend,
The ghostly lords of God's inheritance!

Lured by her specious-phrased emollients,—
Heart conscience-struck, yet unregenerate,—
He donned the cowl, and fearlessly assailed

With meretricious works, Heaven's battlements ;
With fasts and prayers 'gainst wrath importunate,
While penances for purchase-fee availed.

Vain strife, for victory already won ;
The free redemption of Hell's Conqueror spurned ;
And, counting all as an unholy thing

The atoning covenant blood of God's dear Son :
Peace came not,—and despairingly he turned
His search to Learning's shrine, close communing

With the immortal dead, whose buried gems,
Like orient pearls, the cloistered walls retain :
The shells that in ignoble vassalage

Hide what should glow on kingly diadems.
For him the galaxy relumes again ;
The mighty dead revive,—poet and sage,

Historian, sophist, and philosopher.
Science unfolds her sacred mysteries ;
And Art her powers ; and Nature's self—coy maid—

Won by the worship that he offers her,
Her mask withdraws, and to his dazzled eyes
Unveils the primal beauties that it hid.

By her seductive charms, the alchemist
In error wanders while in search of truth,
Still missing it in chase of higher good :

Life's niggard taper running all to waste,
And glimmering in the socket, nothing loath,
While dreaming of elixir to renew 't.

So the old monk, enshrouded in his learning,
Nature's false scantling shutting out her God,
And Truth herself for airy phantoms slighted,

Down to the grave had passed, all undiscerning—
Till lost,—the mazes of the devious road ;
And his large, hungering soul all undelighted

By the glad rays commissioned to illume
The murky shallows of Eternity,
And light the pass to Immortality :

Life's lamp and lantern in the darkling womb
Of night alike engulfed ; fatuity
Bartering for dreams the great reality :

Life's God-wove mystery held a dream of fate,
A rainbow-tissued brittle firmament
Hung o'er Eternity by cords aye loosening,

Until death-shivered and annihilate :
When rose the Sun of Righteousness, and lent
A light that scattered healing from its wing

O'er his rapt soul. As, all uncared, the vision
Of buried loves rehaunts us in our dreams
As every-day familiars,—he had thrown

'Mong theologic rubbish, in derision,
A diamond from him, all its lustrous beams
Hid in the cumbering settings of tradition.

But now soul-fired, its lustre is revealing
Treasures the slave of Science never knew :
New birth into the glorious liberty

Of the sons of God ; the clouds of error, veiling
The mystery of Redemption, in love's dew
Dissolved : in love, the light of Deity !

No field for spiritual knight-errantry ;
No meretricious gewgaws, pride's invention ;
No garish garniture whence the duplicity

Of the deceitful heart may busk a warranty
For a half saviour, and self-won redemption ;—
But the strong arch of Faith's simplicity ;

Faith, all the sinner's righteousness and shield ;
Faith, all his armoury against surprise
Of Hell's assaults ; his ladder, up to light

Lending the heavenward way ; till, all revealed,
Hope in her realized realities,
And perfect Faith, are swallowed up in sight.

Buried within his studious solitude,
The old monk cheated the benevolence
Of his large heart, with blessings his discoveries

Should yet enrich the world with ; but, endued
With Mercy's nobler largess to dispense,
He burns to circulate its blessedness ;

To share with all the God-bought liberty ;
To break Hell's chains, to bid its bondage cease,
And freemen of the Cross to welcome them.

“Drink of life's streams,” he cries : “why will ye die
In arms 'gainst Mercy welcoming to peace,
And God himself descending to redeem ?”

But vain the mission, welcomed by resistance
That spurned God's mercy, laughed at Truth's realities,
Gloried in sin, and armed for its possession

The sensual hive that droned away existence
In Superstition's stale formalities,
Buzzing all hum and sting against the aggression ;

Hurling anathemas 'gainst heresy,
And marshalling the ghostly thunders lent
By Councils, Fathers, with the learned jargon

Infallible, of stolid Orthodoxy,
To face the Bible-bannered armament,
Led by their Captain, God's incarnate Son !

Yet found he list'ners too, and willing sharers,
That owned her power, and bowed in glad submission
To Mercy's welcome terms ; but none whose sadness

Yielded to such a joyousness as hers,
The gentle maid, whose sorrow first had won
His sympathy to share with her his gladness.

An orphan was she, to the love entrusted
Of noble relatives,—as some rare flower
Transplanted, drooping for its summer home.

An uncle she had found,—who, rough incrusted
With crabbed whims of age, and wayward, sour,
And petulant by turns, yet gave love's welcome.

A youthful cousin too, and noble hearted,
Who grew up by her, like some lordly oak
Proud in the embraces of the clustering vine.

But, orphan tears twice shedding, as death-parted
From the hoar sire : ere long a crueler stroke
Rent the last home-links that her heart entwine,

And reft her from the unconscious nurturing
Of love's young dream. Proudly her heart recoiled
From mercenary minions' disregard

Of her young lover's charge, and, torturing
With the chill touch of charity, till wild
Throbbed the lone heart of Lowden's Orphan Ward.

But now, nor longer proudly spurning them,
Nor sorrowing, she adores His wondrous love,
That, sinless, bowed beneath the sinner's load ;

Till, kindling with the Gospel's burning theme,
Her rapt soul, winging to its rest above,
Reposes on the Fatherhood of God.



PART II.—THE LOVERS.

ARGUMENT.—The Chronicler, looking back from the scene before him, telleth of others witnessed there:—when a youthful pair—the orphan maid and her noble cousin—slumbered in the blessedness of unconscious love. But now, after long absence, the maiden waiteth his return, unchanged in affection, yet in doubt, yearning for sympathy in new-found hopes. She dwelleth on the memories of past love, till startled, from their vividness, to question the reality of reunion, she silently yieldeth to its delight. Her lover telleth of knowledge and beauty received into his soul. She listeneth delighted, and, for a time, doubt marreth not her bliss. She questioneth of highest hopes, and is saddened with the discovery that he returneth no sympathy to that wherein she findeth peace. Yet love, surviving disappointment, forbiddeth the banishment of hope. The consciousness of obstacles increaseth its intensity, and she winneth his admiration by eloquence that faileth to convince. The mysteries of God's providence demand our wondering admiration. He who travelled far in search of Truth, returneth still unsatisfied; while the untravelled maid hath in her loneliness found out God.

YEARS have o'erflown,—though still, amid the tracery
Of oriel richly dight with quaint device
Of herald's pageantry, the liv'ried light

Stole into Lowden Hall,—since guilelessly
Gazing into the depths o' the other's eyes,
As they would read love's destinies aright,

Edward and Hellen sat: no words they uttered,
Nor pearly fringing tear bespoke or grief
Or overmastering gladness; 'twas the love

Of novices, that yet were all untutored
In cunning torturings of disbelief,
Or what self-slaved precisians disapprove.

Unconscious were they of love's rosy chains,
Rosy in thorns as sweets, entwining them ;
Or all that lurks in its infolded core :

What thrilling joyousness, and eke what pains ;
Still in the maze of that delicious dream
That, once awakened from, returns no more.

As sister had she loved, and he as brother ;
And then perchance they'd deemed it keenest sorrow—
Though passion strove for stronger utterance,—

To find such tie concentrated in another.
'Tis the brood of fear and faithlessness that borrow
Precocity's love-blinding eagle glance !

But they had parted ;—he, the noble scion
Of Lowden's lordly race, to trim the mind-lamp
And seek fresh oil, amid wide Europe's store

Far wandering ; while the orphan, she, alone
'Mong youth's familiars, deepening the stamp
Of influences mutual of yore !

Years had elapsed, I said : her heart is throbbing,
For Edward now returns ; perchance that hour
Again they'll meet ! whence now the unbidden tear,

And the cheek flushed, and now the roses robbing
From their frail throne ? alas ! knows she the power
Of love's passionate dream ? has she awoke to fear ?

Why should she fear ? the oriel, that before
Screened young Love sleeping, masquerades light still ;
The lawn's still daisy-clad, its herds bound past her

To the woods waked to music, as of yore,
When he with her, there wandering, drank his fill
Of melody ; nor miss they now a master

To give the adagio to their wood-notes wild,
Or list their weleoming. There too the monast'ry
Whence steals along the vale the vesper-bell,

Pleading that man with God be reconciled ;—
Or bears it such a mission to the weary
Sin-laden soul ? To her it seems the knell

That summons to fiercee warfare; for religion
Is now no fond enthusiast's dream insipid,
Tickling the fancy with a ghostly fable;

But prize 'gainst flesh and blood that must be won,
When spiritual wickedness is vanquished ;
And Faith, deep mining for foundation stable,

Smiles at the shallow grave !—But now I wander,
While she, absorbed in thoughts set to the pealing
Of that sweet chime, is tracing up Time's stream,

Fancy's bark current-borne, until it land her
In that quaint oriel's niche, and Love is sealing
His parting infant vows ! Hark ! does she dream ?

“ My Hellen ! ”—Is this knight of noble bearing,
With these deep lines of thought upon his brow,
The home-bred boy, her Edward ? Love ne'er ques-
tions,

And yet an onlooker might doubt their caring.
No wild embrace ! no words of fevered glow !
Each th' other named ; then as fond recollections

Crowded like ocean's billows on each other,
They gazed unquailing each in the other's eye,
And drank love's fill, and knew no more of fear.

And then joy's sudden current, welling smoother,
Yields the quick-crowding question and reply,
Self-lost in sympathy of hearts sincere.

He has drunk deep at Europe's scattered fountains ;—
Has slaked his ear, his eye, his thirsting soul ;
Knelt for the self-styled God-vicegerent's blessing,

On his seven-hilled throne ; and 'mid the Switzer's
mountains

Heard God's own voice through their far vistas roll,
As though dread warning to the universe addressing ;

Had seen the Heaven-lit Raphael's soul outpouring,
Till, rapt in inspiration, he expired
As the canvas shone with the transfigured God ;

Promethean-winged Buonarotti soaring
O'er the amorphous marble, till, soul-fired,
It woke and shook beneath the Sinai-missioned load ;

Pondering, had travelled o'er that vault, unwearied,
Of the Sistine shrine, whereon his seers and sibyls
As o'er its dread assize of God preside;

And held communion with the mighty spirit
That darkling brooded over Hell's abyss,
And, gloom-inwrapt, wooed Misery for his bride.

And what had she ?—As one entranced she listens,
Yet still as hungering for something more,
Something that was not ! While he opens out

His wealth of thought, her eloquent eye glistens
Untiring, all his treasures to explore;
But with the pause returns her haunting doubt:

A wish to question; an o'ermastering terror,
As his who trembles at the judgment-bar,
With doom or freedom hanging on a word.

He has been gazing in the world's broad mirror,
And gathering its jewels strewed afar;
While she, by conscience' still small voice inpoured,

The while hath slaked her longings at that Spring
That whoso drinketh of shall thirst no more.
“And heard you not,” she asks with eager trembling,—

“Bright tales have won e'en here on rumour's wing,
Of the new faith?”—“Heard! yea, the hellish roar
Of the heresy hath made wide Europe ring!”

Why trembles she, and sinks, like a frail flower breaking,
By the tempest snapped?—All, all but this she'd bear,
And feel't no sacrifice;—but he, the noble,

True-hearted one, on whom her soul is seeking
To cling 'gainst all the buffets of life's care,
He armed against her! There had burst hope's bubble,

And all her soul she flung into grief's madness,
And wildly wept. Fierce threatenings had she known,—
The martyr's crown, the fagot's fiery terrors;

Though with them too the glorious gospel's gladness,
By him led up, whose love her lone heart won,
Groping to Heaven's light, through blinding errors.

Grief has she known,—an orphan's bitter dole,
When left in lone dependence among strangers;
The agonizing strife, when faith with fear

Struggles for mastery in the awakened soul,
And wins no peace. Still 'mid sore griefs and dangers
One holy form her prayers and hopes would wear.

She heard of Rome's corruptions : of the assumption
Of apostolic gifts by each mitred minion ;
Of the Most High's prerogative now vended

By priestly mountebanks ; the dear redemption,
In God-o'er mastered anguish hardly won,
Now sealed,—and not of grace, but sale extended ;

And the Rome-gospel's God a usurer !
All this she heard, and with it strove to bring
Vague lines of his, by love's transmuting quality,

In harmony with hopes that reassured her
He, too, the new-born light is welcoming ;
He, too, joint-heir with her of life and immortality !

Housed in Hope's ark she has out-braved worst dangers,
But at his breath the fragile raft's gone down.
Like cloud-built home, piled on the vapour's crest,

That cheats the mountaineer, afar 'mong strangers,
Till wrecked by envious winds : even so his frown
Has whelmed her refuge in the eddying yeast.

Yet if she wept, 'twas on his breast, while tightening
Love's bonds by the very danger threatening severance;
While he, with soothing reassurance, wonders

Whence spring such sorrows. Soon her eye is brightening :

Now veiled to utterances of holy reverence ;
Now flashing scorn against the ghostly thunders

Raised for a timid maid ! She speaks of sin,
A broken law, and an avenging God ;
Of penance, alms, and priestly intercessions,—

Vain purchase-fee of conscience, peace to win ;
Then of our glorious Surety, and the load
He bore upon the cross for our transgressions ;

Of purgatorial fires, the mediation
Of the Virgin Mother, and the saintly host,—
Cumbrous deceits to hide the gospel plan !

Of the blood-purchased reconciliation ;
The quickening presence of the Holy Ghost,
God's pardoning free gift to rebellious man !

She paints the lowly Jesus in the manger,
God veiled in self-assumed humility,
Whose power and majesty the heavens fill ;

For them rejecting Him, against the avenger
Pleader and shield ; for them the bitter cry,
Bowing in agony to the Father's will ;

The broken bread in each believer's hand,
Simple memorial of that dying hour.
Thus picturing—behold the other side !

See his ambassador all proudly stand,
Fagot and sword the emblems of his power ;
And Heaven's gates, that Justice opened wide,

Barred, and the priestly usurer within
Selling the pass, that gapes to adulterous crowds,
Yet closes 'gainst the humbly contrite soul !

The visible Church, traditionally lain
On the apostolic rock, with hellish shouts
'Gainst the Lamb's bride her blazing thunders roll;

Th' invisible, the bride, a fugitive
Fleeing to shelter in the wilderness !
Say, is not this the voice was heard to cry,—

“ Come out of her, my people that believe;
God hath remembered her iniquities,
And wakes to retribution righteously ”?

Charmed, while amazed, to her burning words he listens,
Nature's heart eloquence, though strange, perhaps,
As the first welcome to a lover's ear !

Charmed ! could he other, while her clear eye glistens,
Flashing back love for love ? From such long lapse,
What would not be a happiness to hear ?

Yet seemed it foolishness : the spoils of Greece,
The Romans' eloquence and poetry,
Historian, philosopher, and sage—

All were as household words ; what then were these
But childish fables ? 'Tis the spiritual eye
Alone can comprehend the wondrous page !

How strange God's ways! while he in search of knowledge

Has compassed sea and land, unheeding danger,
So he from every source soul-light receive;

The orphan maid, to learning's cloistered college
And travel's liberal stores alike a stranger,
Has found the noblest truth—**BELIEVE AND LIVE!**

Has learned to know herself; with faith elate
To soar beyond Earth's transitory scene
And hold communion with the Deity;

Led down by Christ, with joy to anticipate
The grave, as to a tranquil slumber lain,
The vestibule that ushers to infinity!



PART III.—THE ANNUNCIATION.

ARGUMENT.—*The Introduction glanceth at the obsequies of Henry the Seventh, passing from the scene, and with him the ancient order of things, now boasting security in the source of dissolution. Wolsey disappeareth in the past; and in Cranmer is once more exhibited apostolic simplicity, so long divorced from apostolic claims. The Chronicler rebuketh those who, sitting in the Reformers' chair, renounce their confession. The Tale is resumed during a brief respite, when Henry, Cranmer, and Cromwell,—strange triumvirate,—unlock the long-sealed Scriptures, and enlist the Pulpit's eloquence in the cause of Truth. On the morning of a high festival—"The Annunciation of the most blessed Virgin, Mother of God"—the cousins, in earnest controversy, pass amid a motley throng to the Abbey Church, to join in the services of the day. Musing on the beauties of the gorgeous temple, the Chronicler contrasteth it with the consecration of the heart; while the lovers, pausing at the entrance, review Art's treatment of their theme of discourse. Within, the Arts, uniting with gorgeous ceremonial, force inquiry into the nature of spiritual worship. The service beginneth, and the still unpurged ritual proceedeth, through invocations to Virgin and saints, to the still unquestioned sacrifice of the Mass. But now the old Monk ascendeth the pulpit, proclaiming the glad tidings of that Saviour, the promise of whose birth to the Virgin Mother—erst commemorated in the festival of Annunciation—hath merged into worship of herself. He publisheth the Covenant of Grace through the death of the Testator; and concluding, proclaimeth Henry's noble boon of the English Bible. As they leave, groups of earnest listeners are discovered around one reading from the new Bible, chained to a pillar of the church. The influence of the new doctrines appeareth variously among the retiring audience; with the lovers, it accomplisheth the divinely-predicted sword, whose edge is household strife.*

O'ER royal dust, through proud Westminster's shrines,
The echoes, waked by anthem's funeral peal,
Wail the death-stricken mockery of power:

The thing that was a king! God-winged designs
Wake not as ours, or error's haughty heel
Had trod the neck of England to this hour!

Infallible, in ghostly dogmas mailed,
In pious panoply most orthodox,
Steps the Eighth Henry to the vacant throne:

Foremost in arms when Holy Church assailed,
The thunders of the Vatican provokes,
Daring to hold God's word above her own!

Strange clashing, thunders out the pious ire
Of holiness and kingship, jointly aiming
To stifle Truth by apostolic knocks;

Yet futile 'gainst a solitary Friar,
Defying confutation, while proclaiming
Rome's treasury of grace a knavish hoax!

But Time, that antiquates hoar age, and changes
Even truth to error, passes on to ope
Oblivion's tomb, while yet in regal halls

Rome boasts eternal empire; light impinges
Along her curtained way, and new-born hope
Beholds God's Ichabod upon her walls!

Even England, curtained in security
Of her long slumber, dreams of storms afar,
And stirs to contemplate the breaking day ;

Ere long to rise, in her maturity,
Van-leading conqueror in the glorious war
That rolls Truth's car on her triumphant way !

Her Cardinal bids adieu to all his greatness,
Never to rise ; and from the Tudor's lust,—
Like lily forced by stercoreaceous ferments,—

Rises a holy, God-commissioned witness,
That, struggling heavenward, is yet to thrust
Hell's barriers aside, and rend her cerements,

And show the Church again a mitre worn
Where apostolic grace and meekness centre ;
Weaponed with love aye conquering, with the glory

Of bloodless laurels haloed ; while, upborne
Through Hell's strong legions, leaguing to prevent her,
God's consecrated ark rolls on to victory.

And shame for ever on the apostate brood
Of faithless sons, who at the altar serving,
By martyr-witness to the bulwarks bound

Of God's own truth, and sealed there with his blood,
Yet dare disown the work, as undeserving
Our reverence, God so signally has owned !

But lowlier far our tale, while yet depending
From lofty deeds: the victory of Truth ;
The desolate upborne all trustfully,

On the untrembling wings of Faith ascending
In lightward flight ; and the unhallowed ruth
Of Bigotry, athirst all lustfully

To slake intolerant passions in the blood
Of God's elect—pluming herself the while
She does Him service !—But a breathing space

Hath fallen to the Church, and she hath stood,
For a brief hour, on vantage-ground, to assail
Hell's leaguered host of listed enemies !

For Persecution now hath ta'en its flight,
Scared by the champion of soul-liberty
Struggling God's revelation to reveal

Anew to untutored minds, that with delight
Welcome Truth's advent: on the darkling eye
To pour new light; the ear long stopped to unseal;

And through the slumbering nations in her might
Moving resistless ; till, at her appeal,
A glorious host wakes up in God's own cause,

To wage fierce war against usurping Night,
And hurl her from Light's throne.

The old father's cell
And Lowden's lordly hall, in the first pause,

Before the clash of the contending creeds
Renew the strife, alike experience
An all-unwonted calm ; and the orphan maid

Banishing sorrow, while young hope succeeds
To its fit vantage-ground, basks in the sense
Of new-born trust that will not be afraid.

* * * *

From brow of wooded slope to modest dale
Resounds afar the cheering peal of bells,
Borne on the fitful breeze's lull and rise

In gushing swell of sounds most musical :
Each lordly hill reëchoing to the vales
That slumber round its wakeful melodies !

'Tis the Annunciation, holiday
Ordained by Mother Church ; and from the dales
That wake in answer to the melody

Gather a motley throng, that wend their way
To kneel, faith-blended, in yon gorgeous aisles.
Vassal, and knight of lordly pedigree,

Yeoman and noble dame, obey the call ;
And 'mong them, deep in loving argument,
The cousins ride : she to his ardour heeding

With kindling sympathy ; then 'gainst the thrall
Of ghostly domination eloquent ;
Or gently for a bleeding Saviour pleading.

But now before the Abbey gate they light,—
A gorgeous temple, consecrate to Him
Who dwelleth not in temples made with hands,

But there most surely fixeth His delight
Within the contrite heart. Yet wherefore deem
Such shrines a mockery ? Though He thus demands,

Before all gifts, the heart with love elate ;
And, lacking that, rejects the impious measure
By pride or fear doled out to purchase Heaven :

Yet, he who owes God all, will dedicate,—
And with no niggard hand,—the God-lent treasure.—
Meek piety, ere now, such shrines to God hath given.

Yet seems the gorgeous porch's sculptured story
Strange commentary : there the Virgin Mother
Tending the immortal God-inveiling Child ;

The marble manger with angelic glory
Is haloed round, and sculpture's honours gather
To tell of Deity all self-despoiled !

A glorious vista bursts upon the view :
The marble avenue's far-clustering aisle,
Now wrapped in solemn gloom, and now bedight

With the impassioned rays, that, struggling through
The saintly host, high o'er the sacred pile
Presiding, colour even Heaven's own light !

The Grecian Muse, enlisting in the service
Of her poetic creed, achieved meet shrine,
When Phidias' chisel woke divinity ;

But when to her sublimer mysteries
The Christian arts aspire, for meed divine
They soar, and mate with her sublimity !

And dull that soul, as withering funeral wreath,
Unthrilled beneath her Heaven-symboling pile ;
As now the light a joyous livery wears,

And now subdued where sculpture's records breathe
Mute eloquence o'er hallowed dust, its smile
Dwells on the tribute of a country's tears ;

While pealing anthems through the lofty span,
Now as angelic whispers softly stealing,
Now on the organ's gathering swell are hurled ;

And sculptured seraphs, from its empyrean
Bending, survey the worshippers low kneeling,
Like lingering spirits from a brighter world.

Dim, through the fragrant curtaining clouds that rise
From golden censers, peers the awe-rapt eye,
Where Art's mute drama, on the pencilled canvas,

Enacts Apocalyptic mysteries :
Time's doom, or that strange hour of agony
When a sin-burdened God to death must pass !

Merging conflicting thoughts, the lovers viewed
That shrine, that for the conscience-severed twain
Alike a consecrated altar rears.—

Since then the owl hath found loved solitude,
And the foul bat a shelter, in that fane,
Where mingled then such differing worshippers !

And where has God pure worship? 'mid the swell
Of such cathedral rites? in sculptured stall?
Or on the lowly bench, beneath the shelter

Of modest village church? or where they kneel
Around the cottage altar?—Even in all
His eye discerns the contrite worshipper!

But now the service merges in the blaze
Of glittering adjuncts: strangely mingled ritual,
That now her God implores; and now to saint,

Or angel, or the Virgin Mother prays;
While souls, all hungering for spiritual
Communion, whose still agonizing plaint

Is aye for aid against indwelling sin,
Starve on the visionary banquet, looming
Through mystery and deceit; and to this world

The closer bound, hire priests the next to win—
Blind guides, that, in the brightness of His coming,
Shall to Gehenna's horrid shades be hurled!

Slow wanes the Church's night, the glimmering east
But streaked with promised dawn; to error wed;
And Christ who, once for all, our surety stood,

Still daily made fresh sacrifice ; the feast
Of love commemorative, thus displayed,
A priestly miracle, and oft renewed.

But Truth hath now her vantage : from the pulpit
Resounds the burning eloquence of language
That wins from soul to soul ; the hoary Father,

Ere while in Error's devious toils beset,
Now stands Truth's freedman, 'gainst her foes to wage
Uncompromising war. The list'ners gather,

Some in amazement, some in glad surprise
To catch the gospel tidings : wondrous voice
For that long silent shrine, reconsecrate

By new annunciation services,
Calling a mourning people to rejoice
And wake to light, that long in darkness sate !

How throbs the orphan maiden's breast while
listening,
With her heart's lord, to the enchanting strains
That bid Earth's wanderers rise, and point the road

On to the heavenly rest : her dark eye glistening
As Rome's deceiving errors he arraigus,
And tells the waking soul, Behold your God !

And now his cheering mission all fulfilled :
The Reformation's God-speed to the soul
Pining for ransom ; free for every eye

The Covenant of Grace anew unsealed ;
Its long lost Testaments of love unroll,
Revealing life and immortality.

For Henry—erst in conscience-thrall's defence,
Dubbed, with the guerdon of the Golden Rose,
Defender of the Faith, by Papal bull—

Now the unconscious tool of Providence,
Leagued with triumphant Truth against her foes,
Proclaims the Word of God the Church's rule ;

And lights a lamp in England, yet to blaze
O'er distant isles, where'er her wealth explores
Benighted climes, or where her navies wing

Their conquering way, the Christian's banner raise,
Till earth's wide vales, and ocean's furthest shores,
With the glad Gospel's hallelujahs ring.

Scotland's far mountains catch the beacon flame ;
And, consecrated erst to liberty,
Now in its noblest cause her sons combine :

Soldiers of peace, that in a Saviour's name
Lead on God's ransomed hosts to victory.
But finished now the Father's grand design ;

With invocated blessings on their head
The assembled crowds disperse : some to arraign
His words ; but more, enamoured of the theme,

To mingle where, to listening groups, one reads
Aloud the sacred page, that by rude chain
Hangs to the fretted wall : the Church's emblem,—

Chained to the Eternal Rock, yet free to all !
Silent, the lovers wend their homeward way :
A frown is on his brow, and deep disgust

In the brief words he answers to the call
For his opinion ; while she to the stay
And Father of the orphan turns her trust.

Peace and good-will on Earth, the angels sung,
Announcing God a dweller among men ;
But Christ himself foretold the bitter sword

Borne with it :—agony from true hearts wrung
By household foes ; and love's own weapons ta'en
To pierce the soul faith-fianced to her Lord,

And lure her to perdition with foul juggle
Of charity's glosed serpent subtlety,
Wriggling into the core to hatch Hell's blight.

God help the lone one in the fearful struggle
Pending 'twixt faith and love's dear fealty ;
They only conquer whom He buckles to the fight.



PART IV.—THE SEARCH.

ARGUMENT.—Considereth the proofs of a First Cause, rejecting the arguments of natural theology, if without the higher evidences from the human mind, with its destinies unaccomplished in this state of probation. The argument passeth to the general majesty of Providential Rule, in the earnest consideration of which the student of the past findeth in every age a voice that telleth of its character and fruits. What then the voice of this age? a period when the unplastic formulas of earlier times, grown antiquated and soulless, are giving place to higher truths, wherein the observer discerneth, beyond the struggle of the moment, the privileges with which it is fraught; while yet are to be found high intellects unconscious of the promise of their age, deeming the once good ever the best. A change hath passed over the scene; liberty of conscience is withdrawn, and, amid many inconsistencies, the Reformation struggleth onward. But, while the old Monk and his orphan disciple exhibit the power of Truth, the Chronicler beholdeth in the young Lord of Lowden an earnest soul missing its rest, and wandering after every semblance of virtue, destitute of self-reliance, with vague credulity doubting all; till, despairing, he returneth for refuge to the old unsatisfying creed; and, scheming to lead back his cousin with him to the forsaken fold, he determineth on the banishment of the Monk. Soothed by new hopes, the lovers are reconciled; and, on the eve of final parting, eternal vows are exchanged.

MAN looks without, to the material world,
For miracle, and proof of a First Cause ;
The indwelling soul regarding as a thing

Infolded, nor, for truth, to be unfurled
In time. Strange creed, that blindly overthrows
The eternal temple for its scaffolding ;—

That, seeking light, turns from this time-lent ray
Fresh from th' Eternal, and, through devious tracks,
Plods darkly down where feeblest scintillations

Glimmer upon the soul ;—that flings away
Faith's evidence of Deity, and walks
Blind 'mid its own God-flashing coruscations !

And what the soul, then ? An unwritten sheet,
A plastic inner world, amorphous, void,
For the outer one to fashion into being ?

Or an immortal consciousness, create
Responsible, and unto God allied ;
With mightiest destinies upon the wing ;

A mighty mission, too, to be fulfilled
While passing back to God ? Momentous question ;
Involving an immortal's destiny ;

Within unopened volumes yet concealed
Of the beyond eternity : alone
Ample as time to evolve its mystery.

Yet God holds converse with the immortal guest ;
Even as of old in sinless Eden's shade
His voice was heard, unfearing, by our sire :

And still, though darkness seem the soul to invest,
Doubts to perplex, and unbelief invade ;
Its nature is divine, and must aspire.

Nor is the ancient prophet voice all silent ;
The God-taught seer a thing of sacred story,
With revelation dumb. God rules the Earth

By providence and judgment still, intent
On ultimates commensurate with the glory
Of His eternal rule ; from whence the birth

Of time and revolutions ; at whose word
A system marshals in the empty space,
Or sinks in void a teeming universe.

From the buried past prophetic words are hid,
Nor can Time's sweeping pinions so embrace
God's ever presence, in their world reverse !

The destinies of the past are for perusal ;
Each teeming volume with instruction full,
E'en from the narrowest soul ; laden as 'tis

With an eternal freight of woe or weal,
And pregnant with impulses, in whose struggle
Life's wave is merged into Eternity's !

What then this age's voice ? A mighty task
Is given 't to fulfil, and who is able
For its performance ? Time hath come to the birth,

And fails for strength ! The iron mask,
Riven from the night of centuries, rocks the stable
Foundations of far kingdoms of the Earth ;

And her time-mummied dead formalities,—
Reflex of lights gone out,—reel to their centre.
Time-honoured virtues, too, with the old faith,

That, faithless now, a hollow mockery lies,
A truth grown false ; with the faint truth-light lent
her
Convulsed, and downward struggling to her death.

Yet there are gifted, nor unearnest ones,
With intellectual powers that promise victory
O'er their time-trammels, who yet blindly travelling

From little light to less, distorted visions
Luring aye further down, until they lie
In Error's coils for which is no unravelling ;

Who might have shone in the mind firmament
As starry mansions of intelligence.
But not such thou, O MORE ! although with thee

The light and darkness still were strangely blent,
And thou didst valiant death, in the defence
Of liberty, in slavery's panoply ;

While thy dear child immortal beauty gains
In the bitter tragedy. Nor such the brave
True-hearted FISHER, who in the old light's setting

Stumbled not, but still found a clear soul-guidance :
Faith's span to bridge across a bloody grave.
For Tyranny's fresh phases are begetting

A brood more like their sire, as Smithfield's fires
Embrace contending martyrs of two faiths
Warring their way to Heaven ; and 'mong recluses

Hamlets and modest vales, where Truth retires,
As in the thronging mart, o'ermastering death's
Soul-argument, smites through life's prison-house.

The Sacred Book for the enlightenment
Alike of peasant serf and tonsured thrall,—
A royal boon, and best e'er king bestowed,—

Becomes illusive snare ; and argument
Of things erst held divine, at its tribunal,—
The liberty of Faith's appeal to God,—

Now fans the fury of the martyr's pyre :
Brave morning stars of Truth. Yet faith to her
Blends strangely with the slaves of pelf and lust,

With superstition's blind, insensate ire,
And mad fanatic zeal : Error's defender,
As strong in confidence of warfare just,—

Of cause not true alone, but Truth's sole fealty,—
As they whose weapons are truth-consecrate ;
While her owned champions, still of Night enslaved,

Prove traitors to her cause, and dare deny
That liberty of soul inalienate,
Themselves the while so hardly have achieved.

Our story hath essayed to show the phases
Of two far differing minds, beneath the sway
Of a purer faith ; the earnest, loving soul

Of the old father, moulded by the graces
Of the Christ story, till he cast away
Night's paramour, new braced for Faith's espousal ;

And the young maid, the same high warfare waging :
The cumbering works of darkness flung behind,
And light's whole armour ta'en for glorious fence

In the life-war, where truth alike assuaging
Their hungering souls, each trustfully resigned,
Rests on the bosom of Omnipotence.

Yet was not he, who stood aloof from them,
An all unfervid soul, or passionless,
O'er whom this voiceless mystery of being

Swept as the sportive pageant of a dream ;
But one deep pondering on the immensities
Time shadowed out beyond, and picturing

A pure soul-shrine for virtue on the curtain
That all impenetrably veiled in gloom
The dumb futurity. He worshipped Virtue

With loving earnestness, and strove to attain
Her aid to rend th' impervious clouds that loom
O'er the light-craving soul ; to catch a view

Behind the veil, and snatch the sacred flame :
That search for happiness which all pursue
Through many a devious track and phantom guise.

Impassioned, with self-satisfying aim,
He struggled 'mid the gloom to find a clew
Should guide to light, and make him truly wise

Clutching at shadows, while his large desires
Aim at the high and true,—the highest, best,—
The invisible, and the infinite ! Ah me !

Without a pilot, and wild passions' fires
Raging within, on Life's wide ocean cast
Chartless, and freighted for Eternity !

Who is sufficient for this ? who is able
To steer across this gulf, that, eddying, surges
Between the two Eternities ? He tasks,

For evidence of God, the untenable
Vain puerilities tradition urges,
And finds a nursery tale, that hardly masks

The sneer of its retailers, proffering it
To the soul's inquiry. He looks abroad
O'er the wide face of nature, soaring high

And searching deep, and chafing at each limit
Of his material prison ; but no God
Speaks to the earnest sceptic : scornfully,

And yet with tearful anguish questioning.
For this had he forsook th' ancestral hall
And love's dear claims : glad exile to endure,

So he might learn were he the chance-born thing
Of a material creed, for the carousal
Of a few dainty worms ; or foul manure

For some rank graveyard's herbage, when the sleep
Of the dreamless rest stills life's impassioned pulses
And takes down the machine ? Or is there verity

In an hereafter, in the abysm deep
Of mid and nether Hell's great agonies :
God's loving bounty for the soul's temerity,—

As ghostly teachers thunder,—that has striven
To reach unto Himself ? The soul faith-fed
By the light of conscience, 'gainst such tale rebelling,

Flings from itself in scorn the garish Heaven,
Antagonist to such a devil's creed
As this, that shaveling huxters are retailing

For superstition's doits ! Poor consolation
Found he far wandering ; sceptics manifold,
Oft hid in priestly guise, whose sneering laughter

Rang through his soul's waste, echoing desolation
In the deep void. The beauteous Earth unrolled
God's handy-work ; but who, in searching after

The soul's repose, in truthful earnestness,
E'er found response in Nature's vaunted treatise,
To fill the aching void ? 'Tis her own faith,

Conscious of giant powers, but yet all sightless,
That, Samson-like, in its blind agonies
Drags down a shrieking multitude to death !

And what then did he ? with a mind bedight
In sceptic mail, that hid blind veneration,
Devoutly questioning each phantom seeming,—

No oak ! but a most lovely parasite ;
A straggling, aimless, wasted desolation,
Of what had hung gay summer's blossoming

And harvest fruits, if with faith's steadfast pillar
To embrace and cluster o'er ; but hurrying guideless,
As by some comet rapt, afar to night ;

Soul-shuddering at the all unequal war :
Judge not, nor blame him, if he did retrace
His fruitless travel to the old glimmering light

He had forsook : the only ark then floating
On that wide waste. Nor a false ark to some
Proved e'en that erring Church ; though now a dreaming

And palsied crone, on ancient riddles doting,
Worn threadbare. But the soul will have some home ;
And o'er the waste he saw none other gleaming

Than her crased bark. With desperate eagerness
He flew to it again, embraced its dogmas ;
Clung to its parting beams with the tenacity

Of a drowning wretch ; and blessed God there was grace
Within its pale, all tottering though it was :
Once faith laid hold on't for veracity

No marvel then if the long tempest-tossed,
Now harboured, view with dread the threatened strife
Involving ruin there ; nor care to brave

The stormy billows, late so hardly crossed.
His part's determined now, in death or life
Consistency's self-bound and facile slave !—

We left the lovers on their homeward travel,
Strange seeds of discord gathering from the source
Of love and unity ; yet he the more

To his soul's idol clinging, as they ravel
The love-forged chains, and he essays to force
Conscience to bend to his mind's garniture !

His resolution's ta'en ; and persecution,
The tyrant Tudor's work, affords fair scope
For his designs. The old monk shall be exiled ;

And he, the fount of heresy, once gone,
Its streamlets will exhale. In such new hope
Love's tearful discords soon seem reconciled ;

Exchanged forgiveness and eternal fealty ;
And as hath oft before, when love is wroth
The strife suffices only to reveal

The indomitable heart's fidelity ;
And farewell partings end in plighted troth
Of marriage's irrevocable seal !



PART V.—THE BRIDAL.

ARGUMENT.—The bridal morn is heralded with mirth, yet the Chronicler looketh bodingly beyond. His vision is of no holiday making, but of the life warfare in a troublous age; for the bridegroom, as it seemeth, with aid of Holy Church, will free his bride from evil influence by banishment of the heretic guide. The scene changeth to the old Abbey. The bride, knowing no fear, wendeth to the altar by her lord. Suddenly she is bid back, and the promised bridal changeth to bloody contest, as the Church's hirelings seize the doomed maiden. Confusion and maddening tumult give place to silence, as the bride bendeth over her dying lord; nor moveth, till led forth, unresisting, the bride of the dead. The scene, again changing, findeth her the tenant of a dungeon, thence only to pass to the martyr's stake: such hath humanity and the Church devised. But anon the scene changeth again. The tribunal is in Westminster Hall: arena of strange contrasting scenes! The old Monk and his youthful disciple are led forth. The pomp of royal state and spiritual power assemble: and, over all, Henry the Eighth presideth supreme: reported tyrant and the slave of lust, yet, as it seemeth, by the Grace of God, Defender of the Faith; in virtue whereof he sitteth to condemn, while the fathers of the Church, tenderly, as becometh their office, commend them to the flames! The old Monk replieth. He scorneth the mediation of saints, as a vain insult to Him whose atonement is already made, His intercession all-sufficient and sure. But suddenly the maiden sinketh: whispering of faith, he biddeth her shame it not; but it is vain, she hath already triumphed in death, and the old father, in tears rejoiceth over the liberated captive. The Tale endeth. The martyr's lesson, already known, we need not linger over the victory of Faith; but hail, in the wane of the rule of might, the dawn of the supremacy of mind, and the promise of a golden age that lieth still in the future.

GLAD revelry through Lowden's halls is pealing,
The busy menials, mirth in every eye,
Hurrying along: the youthful pair the while,

With seemly gravity, but ill concealing
The passion-pulse of love's deep ecstasy—
Too deep for utterance,—'neath a modest smile.

For now's the bridal morn, when Edward, leading
A blushing maiden to the holy altar,
Shall thence bring home his bride ; and therefore
 Sadness

Is scared, and Hope, e'en eld's fear superseding,
Pencils illusive life-dreams. Could Love falter,
Counselled alone by the heart's passionate gladness,

Or deem it an unconsecrated yoke
That consummated long heart-plighted vows,
And cherished life-hopes ? 'Tis a lovely dream :

Alas that the delusion should be broke
Of young Hope's sleep, soon as Experience throws
O'er the lapped eye-lids her chill morning gleam,

And stern Reality proclaims it day !
Up and be doing : in Earth's mother-breast
May the life-weary bid adieu to care ;

But here, as soldiers, must ye war your way
Probational, or lose the heavenly rest.
But see, the Abbey aisles are all astir ;

Scenes shall they witness ere the young day close,
Other than bridal ; and the Church uproot
The weed of heresy, by instigation

Of the noble bridegroom, where it rankly blows
Within her sacred walls, even by the foot
Of her own altar ; so that, left alone,

His bride, by love's own guidance, to her pale
Returning back, shall traverse by his side
The good old paths ! But should the purblind crone

With indiscriminating zeal assail
The orphan maid as well's her erring guide,—
Rescuing, e'en 'gainst his will, a faithful son

From heresy's insidious pollution,—
What then ? Alas, zeal hath ere now o'erleaped
Its aim ; and innocence in error's toils

Dragging the guilty with it, retribution
Swift as the levin's thunderbolt, hath reaped
The plotter in the harvest of his spoils.

But now, with lordliest pomp of Holy Church,
She comes to grace th' espousal : outside show
Most blandly meek and apostolical !

Yet, might the initiate, 'neath her matron church,
Trace ominously there an iresful glow
Dread-worthy wheresoe'er its frown shall fall.

But love and innocence are void of fear ;
And toward the altar, with unfaltering step,
The orphan maid by her heart's lord moves on.

But hark ! what bridal welcome ! “ Draw not near,
To bring pollution from the weltering deep
Of heresy, even to th' Incarnate's throne ! ”—

Is this the greeting by her bridegroom's care
Secured for both ; the gulf and frowning steep
Yawning to part, whom he would make his own ?

Anathemas for blessings ; and the vows
First gladly plighted on creation's morn,
When Paradise beheld its wedded pair,

Forbid by stern Dominicans, who close
Around the twain, and hale, with garments torn,
His bride to undreamt 'spousal with Despair.

A sudden clash of arms ; and shrieks of women
Are mingling with the battle-shouts of men
Within God's temple : vain the late endeavour

Of yon grim priest to stay the unhallowed din,
And bloody carnage, that from him hath ta'en
Untimely being ;—vain his power to sever

The crush of maidens shuddering all affright,
And ghostly warders armed with cross and beads,
And mail-clad men, and knights in silk attire,

But resolute of heart, thus called to fight
For right of heart and altar :—like the shreds
Of some sweet Raphael-cartoon all afire,

And quenched in blood,—as in her bridal robes,
Now dabbled all with gore, the orphan kneels
Where the relentless steel has drunk its fill

Of her Edward's heart-blood ; and life's waning throbs
Suffice but for one gush of love, as wells
That ebb that knows no flow ; and all is still !

All still !—for she nor shuddered then nor shrieked,
But gazed, as in a trance, on the all left
Of what had been her ALL ; and, when they led

Her forth, she asked not, where ?—had they not wreaked
Misery's wild worst upon her ?—love's cords reft,
And wed her in her bridal to the dead !

* * * *

On the poor pallet of a prison cell,
Th' eve of her bridal morn, for heresy
To face their ire, and be espoused to Heaven

By martyr's fiery wedlock ! such the hell
That stern fanatic zeal can sanctify
Within the beast-god man,—all madly driven

A wreck athwart Time's deep : while toppling down
And shivering at his feet, stale formulas
And creeds, and social compacts, and such stuff

As busk the hollow masks, by Time o'ergrown
With venerable cobwebs ; while what was
The soul o' them hath vanished long enough,

And comes chief mourner to their obsequies,
With just such grief as the young heir-at-law,
Tailored in sables from the miser's hoards,

And master of the will ! Yea, how much dies
Ere Time new life-breath draw,
Or stays the strife of fratricidal swords :

Here a frail maiden, there a hoary sire,
Whirled in the maelstrom of the life-abyss,
Its sacrificial waifs. In such a world,

'Mid such blind clashings of insensate ire
Faith only holds the key of happiness,
The standard of God's providence unfurled !

And firm the orphan's faith, now death-divorced
From aught of earth ; no stillness of despair,
But, self-disowned, faith-championed for the fight,

And calm on Him, who through the devil's worst
Of flood and fire, hath sworn, " I will be there,
And lead my own unconquered up to light ! "

Though, on her ashy brow, and hectic cheek,
Deep graved the strife, when the heart's cords gave way ;
And the proud faithfulness of widowed love,

Hiding the wound, bled inwardly, as, meek
In her faith's trust, she gave the well-loved clay
One last embrace, and winged her hopes above !

* * * *

'Tis hoar Westminster's Hall, whose silent walls
Might tell of many a scene of iron lords,
And kings, and steel-clad barons, all unbent

O'er gorgeous coronation festivals !
Of pomp of solemn state, where battle swords
Were laid aside for high arbitrament

'Twixt might and right; here kings in ermine clad
Judging and dooming heart-nobility,
For noble stand 'gainst will tyrannical ;

There of their trappings all despoiled, and made
To doff their kingship, and to a nation's eye
Assume the man!—And now another call

Hath fruitful Time found for it: summoned forth
To answer for the doubly damning crime
That claims supremacy for God's command,

An all unequal pair; yet, in the worth
Of true nobility, of faith sublime—
Meet panoply and arms,—alike they stand.

'Tis Lowden's orphan maid, and the old friar,
Teacher and taught, alike arraigned to prove,
In passive victory, what fiend-like wrath

The God-made soul of man can belch in ire,
To make this earth a hell;—while throned above,
God's vicegerent! defender of the faith!

By courtesy, most noble, righteous judge!
Presides the Eighth Henry, with the devil's broom
In lustful hands, to purge God's sanctuary—

Of what?—of those who, through the dear-bought pledge
Of God-hood's sacrifice, can hail the doom
That speeds the martyr's chariot on high!

Of whom the world's not worthy, yet by whom
The world escapes putrescence ! Shame it were
To dwell upon fair Justice's mockery,

The arraignment, or the smoothly worded doom
With which the Church so meekly yields her share
Of th' hangman's work, commending tenderly

Her victims to the mercy of the flames !
Though even Oblivion shuns that priestly gang
Impaled upon eternal infamy ;

And Time enrolls upon her page their names
In blood that will not out ; though the old Hall
rang
With a united execrating cry

Against their victims, shouting to deny
A faith, forsooth, that shamed her saints, and
turned
Their Church into a cheat ! With dauntless air

They rise, while thus the father makes reply :—
“ Strong in His name we stand, whom priesthood
spurned
From Judah's throne ; the crucified Redeemer.

“ He for us doffed the eternal majesty,
Willing its glories infinite to leave,
And walk our world, a Man acquaint with woe;

“ For us endured the cross, the bitter cry,
The bloody sweat, the passion, and the grave,
To rise triumphant over every foe.

“ God hath no daysman in the Anointed’s place;
Virgin, or saintly host, to stand between
The living and the dead, were but to stay

“ The wide embrace of mercy, limitless
As sinner’s need ; the Immaculate hath ta’en
Our sins, and blotted all our guilt away.

“ By His one sacrifice the work is done :
Nor need there daily offerings to be made,—
The mockery of your Mass, in sight of Him,

“ The Almighty, who so freely gave his Son ;
And He on whom the chastisement was laid,
Who, conquering Death and Hell’s leagued sanhedrim,

“ Rose to proclaim the Atonement freely made,
Then passed within the veil to mediate,
High Priest ’twixt man and God !”

Why starts the monk ?

He will not fail, nor shrink from all now said
On such dear theme; but sudden she that sate
Undaunted by his side, to the floor sunk!—

He turns to reass ure her :—" Daughter, rise;
Fear not, be strong in faith; the crown is ours!"
Nay, call her if you would! On that pale brow

Death hath his seal; she hath attained the prize.
All else forgotten, the old father pores
O'er her calm features; and his tears drop now,—

Tears, not of grief, but joy.

Our tale is done.

Perchance it were not profitless to have ta'en
Light at the martyr's chariot-wheels, that hurried

The father up to heaven. But we have won
The martyr's lesson; nor yet on the wane
Will we believe its power: though mystics
buried

In cloisters, all enamoured of their gloom,
Call shadows substance, and the darkness day.
God's truth than the noon's beams shall shine more
bright,

Since Christ arose a conqueror from the tomb,
That nations such as long in darkness lay
Might see and triumph in His glorious light.

More faith, more light,—not dead formalities
Raked from the dust of mediæval shrine,—
Alone can satisfy the longing mind ;

More manly strength, more child-like trustfulness,
More Christ-like charity : for such we pine ;—
Our golden age lies onward, not behind.





The Death of the Year.

A FEVER DREAM.

" Though this be madness, yet there's method in it!
Will you walk out o' the air? —
Into my grave?"

Hamlet.



LUGGISHLY sank the Sun
Through a ruddy west ;
Like rebellion's mood :

In madd'ning eddy-throes begun,
Shuddering to stagnant rest,
Drunken with blood.

Night's vapoury slaves,
With his pilfered gauds bedight,
Hung on his track ;

Passing to Oblivion's caves,
A gasping year this night
To Eternity gives back.

The hurtling pall o'erhead,
Called to the world around,—
That to the skies ;

My steps were on the dead;
And the dusty ground
Muttered her obsequies.

A fold of Time's winding-sheet
Tight'ning around ; at my feet
The gasping year ! dim visions past,
Tracing her fitful mutterings on the blast :
Adown receding, dim Infinity,
I saw the skirts o' the past Eternity
Infolding back into Oblivion's shroud ;
While, all uncared, it spoke prophetic warn-
ings out.

I seemed engulfed in a phantom sea,
All shapeless as madness' phantasy,
When the fever-vexed soul storms fearfully ;
But lulling to shaped visibility,
Soul-wove, embodied unreality :
Grave's dungeons ravaged ; the dusty dead
Sweeping by in ghostly tread,
Reæcting in shadowy mockery,
Fantasias from life's curt tragedy.

Commingling on the death-stage, numberless
Spectres in wild confusion press :
Phantoms that ride the pestilence,
In slimy weeds inwrapped, led on the van ;
And howling on the blast, the scene began ;
With agony-sated gladness, shivering
The tense air-pulse, until to madness quivering.

Then borne on the gust's receding sigh,
Chorus-swelling its fitful minstrelsy,
Trooped a gentler spectral throng,
Answering wild music to their ghastly song :
Robed in a tissue of withered flowers,
They thus that agonized derision
Soothied to a mild death vision,
Like storm-cloud wooed to summer showers :—

Spirits' Song.

“ Trackless the touch of our airy tread,
As sear-leaf in autumn's forest glade ;
And sweeter than mother's cradle song,
Our whisper-call, as we flit along,
Passing the babe to rest
From its mother's breast.

“ Freight with oblivion's draught, our wing
Glides on to the hoar-tear's welcoming,

As the eld's thin hair longs to twine all still
With the ebon-locks of Death's sentinel ;
Care-reft, all peacefully,
On Earth's lap to lie."

But anon the changing scene is swept,
Like the dim sea-mist at morn ;
And solitude o'er that wild stage crept,
That the phantom shades had borne :

Eftsoon a wild, fantastic dirge,
Sudden swelling, pealing, falling,
Now like the solemn ocean-surge,
Now like the fitful gust, shrieking, lulling ;
And the spectral theatre teemed with sprites,
Clad in the sheen of marish lights ;
With fantastic caper each his part
Played,—sudden, irregular, bounding start,
The fickle changes that lawless flit
In the racking clutch of an ague fit.
Twas the ague-fiend with grin and sneer ;
His train fen-sprites, mime-revelling,
Horsed on the meteor's wing,
To gloat o'er the time-doomed year :
And thus their lawless melody
Rose wild and fitfully ;
Like tremulous fingers of the breeze
Dashed o'er the chords of storm-stript trees :—

Ague Sprites.

“When stars, flung to night,
 Trail on the sky ;
 When the hurtling north light
 Flares her storm-tresses high ;
 When the sleet-storms sleep
 In moonlight shroud ;
 And mermaids creep
 From caves where deep
 Lurk stealthily winds yet to whistle aloud :
 Then to the tryst of Death we hie,
 As Time on the noon of night sweeps by.”

But they start from a noble train, that kept
 Time to heart-melody, as they swept
 In solemn circlings o'er the scene
 Where beauty's transforming blight had been.
 A wingéd torch, at whose burning ray
 The meteor's dull eye-glare slunk away,
 They bore ; and its lambent flame heavenward
 streamed,
 As seeking the star-zoned home they claimed.
 The charnel vaults their echoes rung,
 As thus in answering chant they sung :—

Song of the Spirits of Hope.

“Sweet flowers on the lap of Earth withering lie ;
 Childhood, and laughing youth, all haste to die :

Down to your wormy caverns' yawning steep,
Hope-lit, all trustfully they sink to sleep ;
Calm, on the lee-wave of life's ocean borne,
To where none ever mourn ;
Rejoice not, slaves of Death ;
We wear your conqueror's wreath !”

But all unheeding they gambolled by,
In the mazes of fiendish impety.

Ague Sprite.

“ Hah ! hah ! hah !
I foot it still,
Through bog and foul fen,
Whither I will :
The storm sleeps,
Shall awake ere long ;
The winds are rehearsing
A boisterous song :
Should a wanderer meet my lantern light,
Pestilence twines him round,
His soul is already bound
On the dark journey to the house of night.”

Spirits of Hope.

“ We bind up the leaves of each broken flower
That droops at the knell of Death's natal hour ;

Our undying torch gilds each dark recess,
Where Despair would blot out earth's loveliness :
And lights the mortal to our home above,
Realm of eternal love :
Rejoice not, slaves of Death ;
We wear your conqueror's wreath !

“ Life's couch spreads out below
Night's starry team ;
Earthward their sphere-notes flow
In wild sweet dream ;
The daisy lifts its head
Our step to hear :
Hope's star, that at our tread
Springs everywhere.

“ All living nature's sung
To sweet trance below :
The spider hath slung
His cot on the bough,
And the wind steals along
And rocks it now,
And shakes, as it sweeps,
The foxglove bell,
Where the butterfly sleeps
In honeyed cell ;
Till it lives again the joys gone by
In dreams of chrysalis infancy.”

But ever the elfin sprites reply :—

“The toad is awake,
 The death-watch flies,
 From bog and brake
 Exhalations rise ;
 The mandrake shrieks
 As the wanderer breaks
 Its fatal stalks :
 The demon of ague dances past,
 Spirits of anguish ride the blast,
 The putrid fever walks ;
 The beldam earth creeps fearfully
 As the midnight’s nursling aye for me
 Breeds hideous mirth and jollity.”

Spirits of Hope.

“Ours, when the widowed heart is lone,
 To guide to the light its loved lord hath won ;
 To whisper, though all most loved must die,
 Yet the love of their loved ones will live on high ;
 To wipe from the orphan eye
 Tear-drops wrung out all silently.
 Such duties tend on our happy toil,
 We sun o’er Death’s shadow with Heaven’s smile.”

Ague Sprite.

“Far other our duty,
 Less gay than thine, I ween ;

To scatter seeds of beauty
O'er earth's madly checkered scene.
Still as friendships begin,
We step in between ;
When hearts would be one, I keep them two :
I rust love's chains,
Then affection wanes ;
And my duty 's done,
And my victory won,
When their last link 's gone
By my fickle mildew.
But there are mortals will not follow,
Friends nor frail, nor false, nor hollow ;
But rare I ween, and few are they,
Not twice seen in a summer's day.—
But, hist ! a mortal step approaches ;
Within our pale its tread encroaches ;
Away ! away ! away !”—

And strangely then there crossed,
Unconscious, through that phantom host,
A pair, all faithless of life's fleet charms,
Each twined in the folds of th' other's arms.

Lover. Art thou not all to me ? a changeless star,
O'er the dark waters of life's stormy main
Flinging love's rays ?

Maiden. And thou mine own,
 Round whose strong love my frail heart-tendrils long
 To twine and cluster for a sunny prop :
 Hath not its burden of affection longed
 To win such sure repose ? Thou wilt not change !
 Tell me,—with life, thou wilt not ?

Lover. By the deep
 Unchanging azure of yon welkin's dome,
 That through heaven's grated portal peers on us
 Down 'mong the racking mists, I swear my love—

Maiden. Nay, swear not by't, it is too passionless ;
 There is no feeling on its changeless brow ;
 Swear, if thou wilt, where love hath sympathy.

Lover. By the blue deep, then, that with love-sick
 plaint

Wooes the dull shore--

Maiden. Nay, 'tis a treacherous maid ;
 A boisterous scold, in ire all unprovoked ;
 That,—for the wind's in haste,—must fret and rage,
 And vent its fumes on th' unoffending bark ;
 Love spurns such witnesses.

Lover. By the sure earth, then,—

Maiden. 'Tis more uncertain than the wind-vexed sea ;
 And crueler too, devouring its own babes,
 And hungering still for more. Love sleeps not on
 Such flower-fringed grave.

Lover. Be thou my surety, then,
 Thou wilt not change ; and by thy love I swear—

Maiden. But my young passion—a prone vine—would climb

To its own sun by thee. Thou wouldst not lean
On thine own parasite !

Lover. Come let us hence ;

See you, the storm hath scared the timid Moon,
With all her menials, from yon murky sky ;
Know'st thou no fear, my love ?

Maiden. Fear ! and thy love ?

While I can round, without her niggard lamp,
My ample world, what could I tremble for ?
Dost thou not love ? nay, then, I'll swear for thee,
Though yet—to need Love's school,—a heretic !

Lover. And I, the while, unwearied of the task,
Re-school thee to his faith.

Maiden. How the boding wind
Groans, like a vexed thing, through the matted yews !
Hath the zephyr's bride, the rose,—coy, blushing maid,
That chides so sweetly at his warm caress,—
Lied to her love, that thus he howls abroad
Like love-distracted maniac ?

Lover. Hie we then
To the laurel bower, far fitter eaves-dropper
Than churchyard yews, and the eerie charnel winds.

Maiden. To me,—than this, Love finds no fitter shrine :
He knows not death.

Lover. But yet ourselves can die.

Maiden. To win thy deathless love, eternity !—

So the frail things of earth, in hope, passed by ;
While a phantom sung, as in eldritch jest :—

“ Here is no room for love-laden breast,
Where the hoarse winds shriek,
And the lightnings streak
The storm-cloud’s crest.
Here is no time for earth’s cumberers
Whispering vain vow ;
Beneath are death’s dull slumberers ;
The dreamless sleep below
Knows not the kindling of love’s fevered glow.”

Then, answering him,
The clashing revellers crowd :—

“ ’Tis the fittest time
When the storm shrieks loud,
And lightnings climb
The thunder-cloud,
For life-doom sprites to fly :
For then we weave young beauty’s shroud
When Time’s midnight-hour is nigh ;
Unweave of friendship’s web the woof ;
Untie love’s cords, seemed danger-proof,
And leave young hearts to die.
Oh rare is our glee,
How we gloat to see

The false lover part ;
And the broken heart
That repays our art,
And breaks with fond fidelity !”

A gentler sprite replied, in tones now high,
Now to silence dying stealthily,
Sudden as Æolian music’s mystery :—

“ The rook hath long sought her airy nest ;
The bee and the wild-flower are sunk to rest ;
The baby is sleeping, and smiles to see
Bright spirits are winging round infancy ;
The squirrel is asleep on the topmost bough ;
And watchers that weep are dreaming now ;
While the unblest dead come from earth and
sea,
And unshrouded tread in strange revelry.”

But hist ! who come with a lighter tread,
And wilder, than shades of the shrouded dead ?
With their tresses in snaky knots entwined,
And flung all aghast on the moaning wind ?
Strange unearthly loveliness they bear :
In that hectic flush, and the eye’s wild glare,
The death-beauty Consumption’s victims wear ;
And thus their salute, and welcome there :—

Consumption.

“ All hail, grim sprite !
 Whose bravest delight
 Is 'mong mortals to sever
 Friend from friend ;
 But our boast still is ever
 That true love can never
 Withstand ! withstand !
 When our conclave has said
 They shall sleep with the dead,
 Then love is laid
 At an end ! an end !”

Ague Sprite.

“ Queen of affections, cold and pale,
 All-powerful phantom, we bid thee hail !
 My well-won crest is the aspen tree ;
 A long line of false hearts follow me :
 But the true ones yield at thy sovereign nod ;
 And thy crest is the yew-tree that blights the sod,
 Where the cypress sighs, and the willows weep,
 O'er the graves where our victims soundly sleep.

“ But our fate-winged light
 Too long is dim ;
 We have work to-night,
 Ere the moon is bright
 Or the ravens scream.”

And the goblins flitted from the fevered dream ;
While Consumption's mournful melody
Charmed my enraptured ear to ecstasy.
Like ocean breakers, rose and fell
That solemn chant, in fitful swell :
Like the south wind stealing through the trees,
Or the lullaby of far-off seas,
The cradle-song that the boisterous deep
Sings, soothing the fainting storm to sleep :
While a stately measure the dancers keep :—

Song of the Consumptives.

“ We have paused 'mid the gay scenes of beauty's bower,
And have left our blight on a lovely flower ;
We have passed where young hearts and hopes beat high,
And the hopes now wither o'er hearts that die ;
We have been with fond lovers, long parted then ;
They are parting—never to meet again !

Hearts there are breaking where'er we tread,
Shrouds there are making to wrap the dead.

“ We have passed where the mother gladly smiled
As she pressed the cheek of her darling child ;
And have left a canker, that none can stay,
On the pallid brow of our destined prey ;
And the mother sickens with hope deferred,
As it speeds to rest in the lone churchyard.

'Hearts there are breaking where'er we tread,
Shrouds there are making to wrap the dead.

" We have stood at the altar when vows were said,
And hands have been joined, they dreamt not wed ;
We have claimed as ours the blushing bride,
And snatched her unasked from her lover's side,
And robed her anew, and borne her away
To the couch we spread for her bridal day.

Hearts there are breaking where'er we tread,
Shrouds there are making to wrap the dead.

" We have trod every maze where affections wind,
And left some trophy of woe behind ;
We have culled from earth's garden the loveliest
there ;
We have left the true lover, for mate, Despair ;
We have every fond circle in gladness seen,
But sorrow has stayed where our footsteps have been.

Hearts there are breaking where'er we tread,
Shrouds there are making to wrap the dead."

How fled time in this ghostly revelry ?
Had another cycle sped all heedlessly ?
Or was Eternity's pulse quickening,
As of the fearful death-dream sickening ?—
Annihilation's pall o'erhovering,
And greedily earth's love-buds all incovering ?—

For strange, and how changed, returned again
That fair one, back on the haunted scene ;
But seeming now like a thing akin
To the world she unconsciously mingled in,
That seemed moved, as she of their mates had been :

Maiden.

“ Ah me ! how changed, how desolate the place
Since last we trod !—WE ! there is no such word ;
Nor never more he’ll whisper, hand in hand,
The tale that seemed how passionate and sure !
False art thou ?—Sure he could not leave me thus
All ’reft, to stumble o’er this thorny world ;
Love’s lamp gone blind ; my soul itself astray !
It did not seem thus desolate with him :
The very graves are ruinous ! its confines
Seem a dungeon, whence the prudish vestal Night
Bars out the laughing Day. The fitter for me !
Does e’er the grave make love ? it surely must !
So lover-like, with its bland outside show !
Who could suspect the green and flowery mound
All rottenness within ? I’ll sit me down
And thaw its icy breast to play the wooer.
Knowest thou affection ? do thy wormy mates
Pay court but for thy givings ? Then thou know’st
Heartaches as keen as mine. Thou dost not hold—
Hark thee !—within thy breast my lover hid ?
Ah, would thou didst ! The heart whose treasured jewel

Is garnered in the tomb, hath still that shrine
Whereat to worship ; while Hope's friendly torch
Burns by the while. But thus,—what would I say ?
My brain seems light,—did not he name this hour,
The place, the time ? Come, wilt thou hence with me
To chide his lingering ?”

So the poor maniac ;—

While to the whirlwind's wrack
Consumption's train flung wild their tresses back ;
The goblins shrieked amain,
And the phantom choir sung out again :—

“ Room for the broken heart, make room ;
Love too hath her offerings for the tomb :
We fear not the heavenward torch's flare,—
The grave's foul vapours have dulled its glare :
Light, if ye can, that wandering ray ;
Room for the reason-reft one, make way.”

And the Yew-Wreathed, with her train,
Chanted again,
Tender, plaintive, and harsh by turns :
Like the long sigh of the waving grain ;
Like the dull sob of the plashing rain ;
Like the long gush of the wailing breeze
Swaying the storm-vexed trees ;
And then amain,
As when the angry ocean churns

Her waves, 'gainst wild rock thrown,
To spray-snow blown :—

“ Have we no Hope of our own,
With its blush and flush so rare,
With its smile as false as fair ?
In its voice as tender a tone,
Yet bodeful as the wind's low moan.
Its hectic beauty flashes as bright,
And gleams and pales, as the Northern light.
Ours is a charm to bereave
Lover's hope when high ;
Ours is a bloom to deceive
E'en the mother's eye :
Its glance has a look to grieve,
A light to die.”

But still, as deriding, back they turned,
The wing'd flame of Hope's beacon burned ;
And clear through their shrieking triumphs, rung
The answering notes of her farewell song :—

“ The sickly noon of Time
Swift to oblivion bears
Its bubble pangs ;
A stage too brief and dim
To tell, through the dew of tears
What love o'erhangs.

“ Here’s but the bud of the rose ;
Not nipped or dead,
Though all chill :
In Eternity’s light it blows,
By life’s river margined,
There to drink its fill.

“ Ye are but God’s slaves, lending
Passage o’er the night
Death-brooded deep ;
Angels of hope, flame-winged tending
On their light-ward flight
Through its sleep.

“ Ye can but guide Earth’s grieved ones
Where He shall wipe away
Tears from all eyes ;
Ye but transport bereaved ones
Where in the eternal day
Love never dies.

“ There, on through the pearly gate,
To the golden-streeted town,
And the glassy sea ;
By the river of life they wait,
In the city of God’s renown,
And His Eternity ;

“ Where, spiritual beings, blending
With the God-embracing light
Of seraph choirs,
On still expanding love ascending,
Hope in the unconceived delight
Of Heaven expires.”

And the spirit floated and soared away
As a tongue of flame in its lambent play ;
Yet her beacon blazed like a star in the night,
Burning on with a clear unwavering light,
As she merged in the star-lit infinite.

But the goblins’ marish sheen,
Hid in Hope’s light :
Hung again its sickly screen
On the gloom-bound night :
While thus the doom-sprites resume again
The year’s death-rite :—

“ Join our triumphant roundelay ;
Hope’s beam shorn,
Fades in Death’s morn.
At the dying hour of day,
Another morn is born
As darkly to pass away :
Mortals forlorn, to mourn

O'er the unburied clay
Reft of life's ray !
Come to the rest of the cradled day ;
Come, come away !”

Then in wild snatches their fitful song,
As the goblin sprites lawlessly flit along ;
They thus each ghostly guest invite
To the doom-orgies of the night :—

“ The cold wan moon
Will greet our meeting soon ;
'Tis changing and fickle ;
Come, come with Death's sickle ;
'Tis our fittest light
The pale, cold, bright
Fickle rays of the waning moon !”

Consumption's Train reply :—

“ Tarry not ! tarry not !
While the winds sigh,
Autumn's leaves wither
And rotting lie !
Then speed we, nor tarry,
Vain, vain life's hours ;
The young may go marry,
Their fairest are ours !”

Then in sad-voiced murmurings,
She that the yew-wreath wore :—

“ Twine ye amid life’s strings,
Coil in its core :
Dry one by one its springs,
Still slow but sure ;
Then, when the spark’s nigh gone,
When the victory’s almost won,
Kindle the hectic flame :
Pulse through the throbbing veins,
Tug till life’s frail web strains,
Glow in the dying gleam,
And ’tis done !”

Thus to her solemn strain
Respond her train ;
While in sudden, rushing, gasping cry,
The goblins answer it fitfully :—

Consumption’s Train.

“ We have joined the dance with a merry throng :
Their music has ceased, their mirth and song ;
For the loved of all, from their sister band,
Like a torrent speeds to the spirits’ land,
Nor will stay their call, though they weep in vain
O’er the loved one they never shall see again.”

Ague Sprite.

“Merry is our meeting,—
We have won ! we have won !
Gay be our greeting,—
Our task is done !
'Tis finished, 'tis finished
What we 've begun !
Our aim is accomplished,
Our victory won !
And through bog we'll splash,
And through quagmire dash,
To dance at the hoarse bell's moan !”

And the Yew-Wreathed sang alone :—

“Mother, trust not !
The rose-blush there
Is the hectic signal
My victims wear !—
Lover, hope not !
Thy care is vain ;
Her dirge is sung,
And her knell is rung,
By my phantom train :
Dank is the mould
That shall pillow her head ;
And yawning to fold
Her amid the dead :

The turf is green
That shall wrap her feet ;
And wove the web
Of her winding-sheet."

A knell from the old church tower
Boomed forth :—the midnight hour !
Sounds as of many waters gushing,
Clashing, crashing, madly rushing,
Then expiring in a long-drawn moan ;—
And (gasping as from a tempest, thrown
On the calm strand,) affright, I stood alone.

In a delirious dream
Of the brain-blood ; fever racked,
Wild wandering !—another year

Through futurity's gorge came ;
While, embodied, stalked
Such shapes as pain-wove fancies wear.

I woke, as on my ear
Rose a joyous cry of men,
Borne on the blast ;—

What aspect does young Time wear,
That they should shout amain,
As the year passed ?



A Vision of the Scottish Makars.

"I see that Makaris amang the laif
Playis heir thair padyanis, syne gois to graif;
Spairit is nocht thair faculté :

Timor Mortis conturbat me."

DUNBAR'S *Lament for the Makaris*.



HE ruddy sun, uprisen through a mist
That curtained in the landscape all around,
Was gathering the hoar-frost as he kissed
The crisp meads, where the dew, o'er scaur
and mound,
In crystal jewels, silvered all the ground ;
And, mirrored in the loch's expansive sheen,
Linlithgow's Palace towers, all ruinous, were seen :

While high o'er head the lark was carolling
Sweet matin to the rosy gates of day ;
Hung in the blue vault on her quivering wing,
Still pouring forth the music of her lay,
Whose thrilling notes now fall, now mount away,

Until th' immeasurable dome of sky
Meseemed to vibrate to the thrilling ecstasy.

Filled with the music of the bird of morn,
The poet of the sky, I wandered through
The chamber where the royal maid was born,
Like some rare flower drinking the morning dew ;
Fair, hapless Mary ! hours so bright and few,
That, save for these, through life's long winter day
Lived, withering, for “the ensanguined block of
Fotheringay.”

Thence through the chapel, whose now roofless aisle
Was wont to echo to her infant chant
And prayers, until his power, that could assail
The Romish Church in her most guarded haunt,—
He whom the power of man could never daunt,
Nor knew even pity for weak woman's tears,—
Failed to uproot this seedling of her infant years.

Thus musing, with the matin of the lark
Still in my ear ; and the deep blue of heaven
Inroofing time-worn walls, as 'twere an ark
Flung on Time's deluge, and yet onward driven
Secure ; and, every rein to Fancy given :
She summoned teeming thoughts, and, from the vast
Tomb of the olden time, evoked the nobles of the
past.

Methought the lofty hall all lighted up,
And set with tables, and a dais throne,
That groaned beneath the weight of bowl and cup
And flagon, ranged in costly heaps thereon :
While all around the walls, each sculptured stone
Was hung with casque and antlers, and the spoils
Of war, or silvan chase that royal time beguiles :

While, overhead, the storied galleries
Were thronged by minstrels, that, from harp and lute,
Evoked such rich, enchanting melodies,
The ravished echoes with the sounds were mute ;
Or whispered like some stealthy rivulet,
That, creeping onward through the bosky dell,
Murmurs, as all abashed its modest charms to tell.

And then, I knew not how, but with the speed
Of dreamer's thoughts, the ancient hall was thronged
With men of noblest presence ; that with greed
Methought my eye the grateful sight prolonged,—
Such as a feast to one by famine wronged ;
Until ear, eye, and sense, and soul were filled,
And passive to the bliss that all their powers beguiled.

But soon my dreaming thoughts 'gan shape their ways,
Escaping out the ecstasy that clung
Like sunlight o'er the scene, in dazzling haze ;

And then I could discern the noble throng,
And dwell on each high chief of Scottish song,
Old Scotia's Makars, whose wild notes out thrown,
Thrilled till the lift rang back from her bright morn-
ing's dawn.

And foremost, as by right, in Minstrel Hall,
Her own first James, the royal child of song,
Who, from old Windsor's keep, sung such a carol
As burst its donjon bars, and from the throng
Of noble maids, 'mong whom the "King's Quair"
rung,
Bore off the belle. His stately presence showed
One who, lyre, sword, and sceptre proved no over-
burdening load.

While first in worth ; whose lay awoke the morn ;
Minstrel, historian, poet, all in one ;
Who sang of royal Bruce and Bannockburn ;
Of freedom's solace, and foul thraldom's moan :
Barbour, Dan Chaucer's fellow ; nor alone :
For garrulous with legendary rhymes,
Blind Harry touched the lyre to wild romance of
Wallace and his times.

Nor less Dunbar, the prince of Scottish bards,
Though clad in monkish robes, yet laughing out ;

While on his arm, and hanging on his words,
The Lion-Heart, whom Flodden's bloody rout
Found 'mid the knightly ring, all round about
Hemming with loyal hearts that bold life's close,
Erst gaily welcomed to the bridal of "The Thistle
and the Rose."

Whilst on the other side, his laughing eye
Flinging defiance to his kindly foe,
Dunbar was bandying gibes with Kennedy ;
And, following in their wake, a motley row
Of gentle knights, for either's overthrow
Were watching ; and, as either's "flyting" 'gan,
Through the high roof's ribbed rafters echoing
laughter ran.

Them following, with stately step there came
A hoary knight, of venerable mien,
That seemed as conning o'er some lofty theme ;
And trod apart, as though himself unseen,
And by quick crowding fancies all o'erta'en ;
Then shook his flowing beard, and inly smiled,
Until in wavy locks its ample volutes o'er his
girdle trailed.

But close behind, with quickening step, there trod
One that meseemed well used to dais-floor ;
A herald's tabard, wrought in cloth of gold,

With rampant lion all inwove, he wore,
 And golden crown, the Lyon-King of yore,
 Sir David Lindsay told : with courtly air,
 Yet reverently, that ancient's hand he took, and
 welcomed there ;

Proclaiming loud the knight of Erceldoun,
 Famous in days of yore, their minstrel sire :
 Nor one who but a blazing meteor shone,
 Startling the gazer as with funeral pyre ;
 But a clear burning, central, solar fire,
 Dwelling alone within that distant blue
 Of the far heavens, whose stellar fires are bright
 and few.

Methought a solemn air o'erspread the scene,
 Grave and majestic, yet not terrible ;—
 But rather like the moonlight's silver sheen,
 Whose misty curtain serving to conceal,
 Like distance, all the shadows, and reveal
 A dreamy grandeur moving to deep thought,—
 Seemed at his entrance o'er that company in-
 wrought.

And he the centre of a priestly ring,
 With Gawin Douglas, who the mitre wore,
 And Wynton, Roull, and Heryot, following ;

And Lockhart, famous in the days of yore ;
Though time, alas ! hath set but little store
On many a minstrel loved when he was young,
Sung in Dunbar's "Lament," old chief of Scottish
song.

And there, too, knightly James of Strivillin,
The royal gaberlunzie, took his part,
Who sang so blithe o' "Christ's Kirk on the
Green,"
And wore the duds with such consummate art,
The gentle beggar wan ilk lassie's heart,
And lightlier held the lift o' Scotland's throne
Than the green bays he wove around the Bruce's
crown.

But now apart he walked, with serious air,
And meditative eye, while there he leads
A matron, veiling with her long gray hair
Her face, and all yclad in mournful weeds :
Her eye down drooping on the floor, she treads,
Hiding the wreck of beauty, that a throne
Had lost, and in its stead a rival's deadly hatred
won.

At sight of whom commingling with the throng
Of olden bards, they moved anew and ranged
From end to end the laden board along ;—

As one that on his foe would be avenged
Lingered his blow,—no word there was exchanged,
But statue-like they sat, a stony stare
Throning mute expectation on each noble visage there;

When, lo ! another guest, and o'er each face
A deeper line of thought meseemed to run,
And expectation, that as swift gave place
To wonder, when there entered Mary's son,
England's first James ; but ere the Stuart won
The threshold of the hall such laughter shook
Its roof, as rang reëchoing through its furthest nook.

And then were greetings in mock gravity,
And high laudations mingling jibe and scorn,
And jest flung out with bitter suavity,
And sterner words, by laughter overborne,
And withering contempt on each face worn :
Fit welcome to this claimant for the bays
Won for her bards by flower of Scotia's minstrel lays.

All quaint in their attire, his pursuivants
In solemn frippery uniform ; his train,
A crawling brood of servile sycophants
Applauding in his ear, that all in vain
Heard the old hall with laughter ring again ;

Mailed in scholastic jargon and old saws,
A strutting peacock patched from the prolific nest
of daws.

Until the silent glance of her who lived
A queen dethroned, while he, usurper, ruled ;
The mother, whose own son, all unbereaved,
Degenerate, inane, by all befooled,
In pity's noblest characters unschooled ;
Witnessed the captive's hair in youth grow gray,
And basely perish unavenged at Fotheringay !

Methought the dastard quailed, and shrunk aghast
From the pale beauty that against reproach
Seemed struggling, and, oblivious of the past,
Outstretched her arms ;—where should he dare
encroach
The lion-hearted James meseemed to watch ;
And, as he slunk away, with such a clang
Flung back his sword, the furthest echoes to the
music rang.

Whereat 'gan trooping in another host,
Whose coming seemed to fill the expectant void,
So strangely mocked by the intruding ghost
Of regal pedantry : a noble pride
Sat throned on either's brow, as side by side

Each Makar welcomed by him, to the board,
The younger sons of song, that had the gentle craft
restored.

There entered Ramsay, linked with Ferguson ;
And Burns, that towered a giant 'mid the throng ;
Whom, as he passed, each gave his benison,
Till the first James, who from the midst outsprung
And hailed him brother there, whose hand he wrung ;
Whereat Dunbar his own bay wreath upflung,
And crowned the peasant bard the king of Scottish song.

Close in his train, a noble following came,
Thomson and Grahame, and Tannahill and Scott,
With Skinner, Smollett, Campbell, Cunningham,
And many another name not soon forgot,
All mingling freely with those bards of note,
The giants of the eld and younger times,
Whose pregnant words outvie the minstrelsy of
sunnier climes.

And then they held high converse of the meed
Of Poesy, and of its lofty aim ;
Its treasury of old heroic deed,
And high prophetic office,—nobler claim
Than chosen handmaid of enduring fame,—
To breathc in words of burning eloquence
Eternal truths, a nation's noblest, safest, best defence !

To charm the willing ear by silver song,
Strung to the themes her bramble-trellised burns
Chant to the mountains as they rush along ;
And win by graver melody, by turns,
And lightsome lay, th' unconscious soul that
spurns
Law's stolid rule ; exalt her noble cause,
Whose humblest lay outweighs the influence of a
nation's laws.

Then reverently they spake of elder bards
Whose hands had grace to strike the impassioned
wire,
As each with fervid eloquence awards
The Muse's honours to some favourite sire,
Who won sweet numbers from the heavenly lyre,
And handed down through the prophetic line
The glorious meed of song, the minstrel art divine.

And Drummond spake of rare old Ben, his frere,
The while Buchanan dwelt on classic times ;
And James sang proudly “ of his maisteris dear,
Gower and Chaucer ;” while with loud acclaims
There each some minstrel's honoured name pro-
claims,
The Bard of Avon's dwelt on every tongue,—
The poet of all times, the master-spirit of the
power of song !

And there was one that spoke of Poesie,
 A bastard hind, that pandered to vile lust,
 And dragged the heaven-born Muse adown to lie,
 Grovelling in shameless prurience, in the dust ;
 Of names shall rankle in eternal rust,
 The vulture scavengers, whose piercing vision
 Served but to elevate their Muse to infamous
 derision.

With that, with arms across, and hand to hand,
 They rose, and looking up invoked high Heaven ;
 But ere my willing ear could understand
 The solemn adjuration they had given,
 Meseemed athwart the glorious vision driven
 A misty veil, that curtained as it grew,
 And all the living scene to shapeless phantasy
 indrew.

In hoar Linlithgow's royal hostelry
 Within its festal hall distent I lay,
 But crumbling walls alone I could descry,
 Unroofed, save by the noon sun's canopy,
 Yminstrelled by the mavis' roundelay,
 That charmed the answering echoes with the tune
 Heard oft of yore among the silvan shades of
 Erceldoun.



Evening Musings.

"I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns.

WORDSWORTH—*Tintern Abbey*.



MPRESS ! who wield'st thy sceptred sway,
Tracking the path of the parting day ;
Rolling along in thy shadowy car
By the herald light of the evening star ;
Soft as the gentle breath of spring,
Noiseless as spirits revelling,
And hushed and deep are the thoughts that burn
In the soul that welcomes thy glad return.
Night ! how I love to watch on high,
As the setting Sun illumines the sky,
Each coming star on the silvery track
Where thy chariot rolls thee to empire back,
Till the Moon's pale radiance crowning the Night,
Bathes the spangled robe in her silvery light ;

And her dewy beams o'er the landscape steal
In illusive blendings that half reveal
A scene as witching as dreamer's eye
Ere visioned, in beauty and mystery :
Unveiling the wondrous charms that glow
Amid meanest things in our world below ;
Though hidden in the noontide blaze
From the weary toiler's earthward gaze.
Then the soul, enfranchised, wings her way
Through brighter paths than the track of day ;
And scenes long past, and hopes long since proved
Baseless as dreams of the lost and loved,
Return once more, as around we see
In the sheen of thy star-gemmed brilliancy,
Unchanged, yet so strange, the earth repose,
While the stream in the moonlight ripples and
glows,
As they did of old, while the loved still lay
Around every path where young feet could stray,
And hope, unabashed, met the gaze of day.
These are the hours whose return we hail,
When Fancy stretches her airy sail ;
When Memory as pilot sits to guide
Our bark through the swift returning tide,
Till we quit the past for a brighter day,
As Hope takes the helm and Desire the sway ;
When we fan the flame of Ambition's spark
To illumine the prow of our gallant bark ;

And bounding o'er the swelling main,
We snatch each prize we long to gain,
Till all yet achieved to the past is thrown,
As each hope seems attained, each desire our own.
But what is the gorgeous fairy-work
 Created by Fancy's wand,
To the music of the soaring lark,
 When heard in my native land,
Where Heaven's bird mounts to meet the sun
 Ere it kisses the mountain's brow,
And hails his mate to behold its dawn
 Far in the vale below !
The heart leaps fondly to that land
Where the cottage homes of childhood stand,
 Though humble may be each hearth ;
And pledges its weal in a manly tear,
When on foreign strand there meets the ear
 A song from his land of birth ;—
But what are his raptures, though deep and wild,
To the home-sick love of a mountain child !
The scenes of England are beautiful :
Her stately rivers majestic roll
Through cultured plains, whose hamlets tell
Of homes where love and contentment dwell.
From her gently swelling hills you spy
Each ivied turret greet the sky ;
And her palaces on every hand
Speak of a great and happy land.

But our northern rivers foam and chafe,
And thunder along o'er rock and cliff,
And bound and dash from the mountain's brow
Till they mirror its form in the wave below,
And the joyous shout of the rushing flood
Is hushed in the lake's vast solitude.

The southern hills, like a summer tide,
Swell in rich verdure on every side ;
But Scotland's mountains seem fit to be
A judgment-throne for Deity !

The mountain storm's reëchoing noise
Repeats the terrors of Sinai's voice,
As the thunder rolls from vale to sky
And answering echoes shout reply,

Till far the cathedral anthem swells,
While the solemn organ's deep tone peals
And reverberates through the lofty aisles
Of these temples, the world's Creator's hand

Hath reared to himself in that glorious land.

'Tis there, 'mid the everlasting hills,
At these altars the simple peasant kneels,

 And worships his fathers' God ;

Then rising, looks from his mountain cot,
On the land-marks that far in the azure float,

 The towers of his native sod ;

And boasts a domain more fair and free
Than the acres of titled nobility

 Where sunnier climes are trod ;

'Tis liberty's cradle ! 'tis history's pride !
For their homes and altars its sons have died,
And left for our birthright as proud a name
As nobles trace on the rolls of fame,
Or monarchs in their line ;
A name her sons shall still retain
While each peasant's cot is a Christian fane,
And each towering cliff of her wide domain
A consecrated shrine !

How soft the sounds of evening seem !
As though Nature, stirred by a pleasing dream,
Breathed forth upon the silent air,
Low as an infant's lisping prayer ;
Whispering through grove and vale and tree
A vesper hymn to Deity ;
While, faint as the memory of parting day,
The Sun smiles back a farewell ray ;
The Moon, like a maid to the altar led,
Comes forth in her bridal robes arrayed.
No gaudy track, like the Sun's, from far
Heralds the path of her silver car,
But she steps at once, ere his light is gone,
With queen-like grace, to her starry throne ;
While every flower in the bright parterre,
That has stood unmoved through the Sun's fierce glare,
Gracefully bends, at her sovereign tread,
In obeisance low, its lovely head ;

And the butterfly calmly sleeps within
While Silence and dreams their reign begin.
As we tread the maze of the forest glade
The moonlight alone seems awake in the shade,
Flickering and dancing amid the trees,
As each slumbering leaf is stirred by the breeze :
And there floats a sound through the solemn scene,
Like the gentle murmurs that intervene,
When the calm blue sea o'er the bright sands lave,
Each rising riple of its restless wave ;
Yet soft and low, as though Silence then
Swept through the scene with her noiseless train,
And awoke the dream of sounds that dwell
Sealed in the caverns of Memory's cell.

But see where the god of day went down,
More bright as he stepped from his dazzling
throne ;
Where the curtained clouds are richly drawn
Around the monarch's pavilion :
The evening star gleams faint on the eye,
Like memory's voices of infancy.
But sky and soul are changed too soon
From the glorious vision we gaze upon ;
Not stars alone to the night are given,
For clouds enshroud the face of heaven ;
And sullied by storms is the infant day,
As its bright dawn swiftly speeds away.

But tended around by her starry zoue,
The Queen of Heaven resumes her throne ;
Repelling the mists in stately pride,
Like a vessel breasting the foaming tide ;
Till her empire's unsullied splendour shows
Cloudless as when she first arose.

Would that, like clouds, from the infant soul
The storms of passion as light would roll,
And leave it, as He by whom life is given
Could say,—Of such are the sons of Heaven.

Evening, mild sister of the rosy Day,
And Night thine ebon twin ; along whose way
Are scattered Heaven's jewels ; yet so chaste
Thou wear'st her diamond zone around thy waist,
And thy gemmed coronet ; thou seem'st, dark
maid,
As of thy charms all bashfully afraid :
As though while sparkling loveliest to the sight,
Suffused with blushes ; when the northern light,
Like warm blood mantling on a maiden's cheek,
With silver flush along each quivering streak
Pulses in life-like ebb and flow ; its gleams
Cheating the gazer into waking dreams
Of fanciful conceit. Sweet sister twain,
Elder and younger, welcome here again,—
Together, yet apart,—as hand in hand,
With tears of odorous dew ye seem to stand

Weeping a forced farewell, till Solitude
Owns the dark sister, Queen. How art thou wooed,
How welcomed, by the lone heart-broken maid,
That feels as of the bold, bright day afraid,
And weeps till thy return ! How lounged for thou
By the dull watcher, from whose fevered brow
Sweet sleep hath fled ! who yet, when thou art
there,

Chides that the dawn so tardily draws near.
Night and her due repose ; then dawn and dreams,
As through the glimmering twilight come the gleams
Of Fancy's lawless revellings : the romance
Wherein she sports with Truth, gives utterance
To gay imaginings, and boundless aims,
And fond desires, such as experience tames
To sober fact in the truth-telling day.

When, too, Remorse and Conscience no less play
In bitter sport, and conjure up a brood
Of phantoms fit to appal night's solitude.

Dread Solitude ! the lyre hath hymned thy praise ;
Within thy ken night's glorious orbits blaze ;
And in thy calm the soul can wing its flight
From finite longings to the Infinite.

But poet's numbers little care to tell
How there the lonely spirit will unveil
The secret sin, the mystery of care,
Till, face to face, it meets the stony stare,
And cowers before the promptings of despair.

But, why such thoughts on this glorious night,
Intruding where all around is bright ?
Away ! let the calm of this lovely hour
O'er me its soothing influence pour.
Let its spirit, hovering, move above
The troubled soul, like a brooding doye
Soothing its cares with a song of love ;
Till the lost ones, that find a hidden place
In the depths of thy silent loneliness,—
The loved, the mourned, the departed, come
From the spirit-land's mysterious home ;
And we commune again with those whom Death
In his sanctuary shadoweth ;
The holy shrine, where the heart retires
To relume again its earth-quenched fires,
And learn—alas that heavenly treasures
Should ere be tried by earth's shallow measures !—
How pure, and lovely in light, are they
Whom we yearned to discern through covering clay,
When the fleshly garment is rent away.
Alas that the fountain of love should be
So tainted with earth's impurity,—
That we vainly sound for the deep recess
Whence it welleth up in holiness ;
Nor dream of the clear unfathomed deeps
Wherein the yearning spirit sleeps,
Till death the dream of love is breaking,
And we weep in vain to behold them taking

To a sleep too deep to know awaking.
Yet why would we mourn, who look to join
Our loved ones there, where the daisies twine
Their roots with the gray moss and eglantine ;
Where the rank weeds seem to find a pleasure,
Like dragons in guard of a golden treasure ;
And even the noisome nettles sting
The coarse hand, profanely gathering
From the odorous garland Spring doth shed
In annual wreaths o'er Death's coverlet.

O Night ! thou blottest out the colouring
Wherewith the golden Day is picturing
A boundless range of changing loveliness ;
And yet thy colouring doth no less express
An infinite beauty. In thy ebon pall
Wherewith, as in a shroud, thou wrappest all,
Gems sparkle, that beseem one led
Royally to the nuptial bed !
O raise our thoughts, and teach us to discern
What perfect beauty springeth from the stern
And loathsome grave ; oh, bid thy stars shine out
Like hope, above the dead, till not a doubt
Mar the deep beauty of their memory ;
Till in each buried dear one, love descrie
A harvest treasure, ripening for the sky ;
A seedling flower th' All-loving purposeth
To garner in the grave, until He perfecteth
Bright life-buds, by the ministry of Death.

O Earth ! Earth ! for as busy as thou art
At Pleasure's shrine, or in the crowded mart ;
And for as beautiful, with thy blue sky
Shedding dews for the flowers so lovingly ;
And for as firm, the everlasting hills
Weeping their very tears in hurrying rills,
That change themselves to rivers, and rush on
From the gray east to the declining sun ;
And seek their slumber only in the motion
Upon the bosom of the restless ocean :
O Mother Earth ! for all thou seem'st so stable,
Meseems, of all thy children, none are able
To find a rest, save only those are hiding
Safe under cover, in the grave abiding.
I'll hie me rather where the clouds are dipping
Their fringes in the west ; the sun, though sleeping,
Smiles on them there : I'll build me there my mansión,
Where thought shall dwell, and know no apprehension
Of tears, save such as rainbow clouds shall weep ;
Nor sighs, save of the zephyrs as they sweep
Sweetly adown the west, into the bowers
Soul-consecrated for her holy hours
Of meditation ; where the Evening pale
Lists to the love-song of the nightingale,
Till the thoughts, ravished with the melody,
Wander unconscious from the minstrelsy
To lose themselves in holier reverie.

Thus from the starry empyrean, down
To Death's abyss deep, the sonl hath flown
On thought's still wing ; thus have your starry wheels—
Whose silver chime in winning measnre steals
O'er the enraptured soul, until she leaves
Earth and the things of time, and swiftly cleaves
The ethereal waves of that far, silent sea,
Wherein ye wander through infinity,—
Borne her, in dreamy musings revelling,
Down to the shadowy realms of gloom, whose wing
In raven plumage broods above the deep,
Whose calm, unchanging terrors never sleep.

Unquenched, unquenching suns, that blaze on high !
Dwells there among the planetary train
That track your footsteps through the midnight sky,
Another such as ours ; where crime and pain,
Self-introduced, have made the God of love
The dread avenger of His broken law ?
Or walks He there, through peaceful bower and grove
Familiar, as of old with man below ?
Say, do ye look from sinless purity
On this illumined atom in the sky,
And ask in wonder—" Arms He not for war ?
Is not the Almighty's dread right hand laid bare ?"
Or watch ye, in this planet hung in space,
A type of mercy, with its rebel race,
To show,—while wondering worlds adoring prove,—
The mighty mystery of redeeming love ?

All vainly the exacting soul desires
To light her little taper at their fires,
And with the stars of heaven find fellowship ;
Struggling 'gainst fate, with curious gaze to dip
Into the gloom beyond, and feast her eye
On the sealed volumes of her destiny :—
Night's azure folds by Fancy's vision ta'en
As wrappings of Time, to curtain in
Her petty span of being ; and her stars
Nought save the mystic, written characters
Of the eternal pen, there fixed to trace
The unborn secrets of Time's dwelling-place !
In you, ye infinite realms of mystery
And beauty and perfection, may the eye
Read other lessons, find a different tongue :
A power, and mighty melody of song,
Hymning of God's perfections, of His love,
And of the calm, bright destinies that move
High o'er the petty waves that Time up throws,
On leading to perfection as its close.
Did the lost Pleiad your bright circle leave,
Ye lovely sisterhood, that we should grieve
But over some air castle toppled down
By man's ambition ?—or a world o'erthrown,
And from the eternal eye of God outdriven
In your far distant battle-field of heaven ?
The prophet, rapt in ecstasy sublime,
Saw, while in Heaven was silence for a time ;

But the rapt eye beholds a world destroyed,
And gazes in the heavens on a void,
Annihilation's reign begun, where stood
A field of sentient beings once called good ;—
O mystery of mysteries ! a blot
On the pure sky ; a world by God forgot ;
A sun that once had being, and is not !

Thus may the soul, communing with each star,
Catch still, in awful vision from afar,
Glimpses of light : the comet, sweeping by,
Hurrying her far into infinity ;
Or, bound within his narrower rule, may run
Through the far-stretching empire of the Sun :
With Jupiter outspeed his swiftest spheres ;
Or slowly pass the term of human years
In traversing the limits where extends
The solar rule, where, far off, Neptune stands
The outward sentinel in his bright tent ;
One in the gorgeous field, whose vast extent
Glitters through all its lines with countless such.
Or spurning, while yet further off she snatch
Glimpses of glory far transcending these,
Speed where the Polar Star her silent watch
Keeps in the north, or to the Pleiades,—
Or bright Orion ! Fancy's ear can catch
Tongues in the brightest stars that nightly blaze ;
But, waking what are we ? and where are they ?

Their solemn march unchangingly they keep,
Through time and space, on through infinity ;
While we, but atoms in the mighty deep,
Waifs, whose existence,—save the Almighty eye,—
None in these multitudes of worlds discern,
Hug the fond fancy that our destiny
Is linked with theirs !

Thus, wandering thoughts return
Back from their wildest flights ; we learn at length
The fitter lessons of humility.
Return, then, welcome rest ! our waning strength
Asks for renewal : “ While we think, we die ! ”
And, in the mightiest efforts of our thought,
Prove but His vast and all-sustaining power,
Who called us into being out of nought ;
And whose beneficence now draws once more,
Around a slumbering world, the robe of night,
And curtains up the couch where weary man
Seeks restoration from perpetual blight ;
The refuge, whose impartial portals can
Exclude alike both anguish and delight :
Where life’s dread foe assumes benignant rule ;
And in its arms, unconscious of strife,
He passes through the grave’s dark vestibule,
Snatching, in Death’s embrace, the new day’s life !



The Scot Abroad.



H, to be in Scotland now,
When the mellow autumn smiles
So pleasantly on knoll and howe ;
Where from rugged cliff and heathy brow
Of each mountain height you look down defiles
Golden with the harvest's glow.

Oh, to be in the kindly land,
Whether mellow autumn smile or no.
It is well if the joyous reaper stand
Breast-deep in the yellow corn, sickle in hand ;
But I care not though sleety east winds blow,
So long as I tread its strand.

To be wandering there at will,
Be it sunshine, or rain, or its winds that brace ;
To climb the old familiar hill ;
Of the storied landscape to drink my fill,
And look out on the gray old town at its base,
And linger a dreamer still.

Ah ! weep ye not for the dead,
The dear ones safe in their native earth ;
There fond hands pillow'd the narrow bed
Where fresh gowans, star-like, above their head
Spangle the turf of each Spring's new birth,
For the living, loving tread.

Ah ! not for them : doubly blest,
Safely home, and past all weeping ;
Hushed and still, there closely pressed
Kith to kin, on one mother's breast
All still, securely, trustfully sleeping,
As in their first cradled rest.

Weep rather, ay, weep sore,
For him who departs to a distant land.
There are pleasant homes on the far-off shore ;
Friends, too, but not like the friends of yore,
That fondly, but vainly, beckoning stand
For him who returns no more.

Oh, to lie in Scottish earth,
Lapped in the clods of its kindly soil ;
Where the soaring laverock's song has birth
In the welkin's blue ; and its heavenward mirth
Lends a rapture to earth-born toil—
What matter ! Death recks not the dearth.



Arthur's Seat:

AN APOLOGY.



WATCHED the sun sink in the golden west,
While the old city, spread beneath my feet,
Engirdled the green slopes whence Arthur's
Seat
Lifts his bold crest ;

And from the height my thoughts went down among
The purple smoke-cloud, with its throng of men,
And thence to generations that had been
When Time was young ;

And thinking of the hours, perchance misspent,
Tracing Time's footsteps some few centuries back,
'Twas thus my fancy shaped its wayward track,
And found content :—

The Earth moves eastward, pressing towards the portal
Of earth-born dawns ; the Sun her motion borrows,
And Time sweeps past to meet the coming morrows,
For ever mortal.

For 'tis the Earth and Time that, in such rounds,
Are ever dawning ; while the full-orbed Sun,
And sphered Eternity whence Time begun,
Know no such bounds.

To God 'tis ever noon tide, one round sun ;
And ever *now* with the Eternities ;
Sphered in completeness, every aspect is
The full-orbed one !

Children of Earth, we think her sunsets golden ;
Her dawns the portals of a new day's hope ;
Her pasts eternities behind the slope
Of Time, waxed olden.

We take the crescent bow of the ample round—
All else concealed—to be its very whole ;
And as we move, it—moveless—seems a scroll
Ceaseless unwound.

The seeming being to us the actual ;
As anguish, though in dreams, is anguish still ;

And thoughts whose grasp the soul's whole orbit fill
Are the soul's all.

And so each moment's *now*—which to God's angels
Must seem but as a sand-grain on Time's shores—
Weighed by us 'gainst Eternity, o'erpowers
God's own evangels !

And, if we quit such moments, what remain ?
A Past, dark cradle-time, we call Antiquity ;
A Future, in whose vague ubiquity
Thought grows to pain.

Antiquity being that which once hath been,
The Present only is ; while all futurity
Being still to be, its vast maturity
Hides in't unseen.

And as one wandering long in mazes vast,
In vain pursuit of clews that break and fail,
Or spreading on the deep a breezeless sail,
Sickens at last ;—

So, having such a Janus-fronted Time,
And having asked of that which is to be
Vain questionings of world's futurity
And the soul's prime ;

I turned for answer, wandering through the past,
Century by century, to the infant years,
Cradled wherein the mythic form appears
Of things which last;

Ransacking in their dust for buried gems ;
To bring from out the grave, in living guise,
The heroes of the past, and realize
Historic dreams.

Yet pleasant were't, methinks, some autumn eve,
When all the business of the world seems done,
To sink to slumber with the setting sun,
And take our leave,

And sleep away the centuries, while speeds
The world, with all the passions of our time,
And wake again to see its nobler prime
And loftier deeds ;

And sleep again, to wait another leap
Of the world's progress in the coming time ;
Triumphs of science, poet-souls sublime,
Walking the deep !

Fearing no tempest 'mid the calm, wide seas
Of the world's brotherhood. The people's cause

In harmony at length with Nature's laws,
And Man's with these.

Or find perchance, as has been, the stern hand
That marks world-progress on Time's awful dial
Turned back ; and see again the age of trial,
The martyr brand ;

The shadow following upon the light ;
The winter of the ages, with its sear
And shrivelled leaves, its blight, its chill, its fear,
Its rayless night :

And yet not rayless all ; some starry beam
Still glimmering in its darkest, there foretelling
The nearer spring's awakening, the dispelling
Such dark-born dream.

Pleasant even this, looking with calm, pure eyes,
And sense of over-ruling minist'ring,
On such, as but the shadow of Love's wings,
'Neath which all lies :

Love, all-embracing as the universe ;
The atmosphere, wherein is Heaven's life,
Wherein will wane all struggle and all strife.
All passions fierce ;

While, like a summer sea, its living calm
Rests never, surging upward as a deep
Whose voice of many waters skyward leap
In joyous psalm.

Vain ! vain ! A dream !—perchance with truth
inwound,—
Worth sleeping to dream on ; worth death's
dread sleep,
And wormy pillows of the bed, grave-deep,
And morn beyond !

And what if, comet-like, our future runs
Through all the eternities, from sphere to sphere,
Watching with brooding centuries appear
Secrets of suns ;

The science of the worlds, from star to star,
And all the souls of them, the onward press
And upward reaching unto happiness
Undreamt before ;

An inexhaustible, unwearying chase,
Love's labour sateless, endless, without toil :
Joyous as reapers o'er the harvest spoil,
Victors in race !

Methinks, even then, 'twere pleasant to look back,
If but in wonder at such blindfold souls
In strange disguise, unconscious of our goals,
Or star-paved track ;

To think, perchance, of yon quaint, antique town,
As of the larva cocoon whence such grubs,
Bright-winged and beauteous in Heaven's own robes,
Sphereward have flown ;

And smile how all their human griefs and woes
Shall mar no more their entrance on God's gladness,
Than cradle-tears augment the brave man's sadness,
Or dim life's close.





St. Anthony's Well.



N fancy, I climbed the height
Whence the hoar walls look down,
Where St. Anthony's fane, in the pale moon-
light,
Stands ruggedly gaunt, like a ghostly sprite
Brooding above the town ;

Where the stream of the sainted well
Flows from the rock beneath,
Pure as before such ruin fell
On the shattered walls of its hermit's cell
In days of a simpler faith.

Were they happier then than now ?
Unquestioning, credulous, gay ;
There was ardour and truth in the lover's vow,
There were hearts and passions as fondly aglow
In that olden time, as to-day.

Life then was, what it is still,
A jumble of pleasures and sorrow ;
The oceanward course of a tiny rill ;
A daylight dreaming that works its will
'Twixt a yesterday and a to-morrow :

A rivulet shaping its course
In the rifts that by chance befell ;
From hopes to regrets, from desire to remorse ;
A bubbling, babbling, wayward force,
Like the stream of this sainted well :

Onward and downward amain,
Through life's coursing shadows and light,
With its toil and strife for men,
Its love for woman, and then
Its quiet rest in the night.

And has life no sunshine now ?—
Day's glow, and then night star-crowned ;
And Time, with the harvests that ages sow,
Gathering aye as the ages grow ;
And Eternity beyond.

Beyond !—and here life and time,
With goals for which ages have striven ;

The triumphs of mind, and thoughts that climb,
And soar to the conquest of heights sublime :
Earth's future first, and then Heaven.

Content thee, then, though the glow
And the stars of a new world's sky
No moss-grown shrines of thy childhood know,
Nor sainted founts of the past, that flow
Where life's later pathways lie.

Life's morn has long passed away,
Its noon speeds with flashing light ;
The sober evening replaces the day ;
And the gloaming along life's westering way
Fades on towards the shadows of night.

There are founts of faith run dry ;
Ruined hopes moss-grown in decay ;
Buried loves whose memories will not die ;
And cherished idols that broken lie,
Strewing life's checkered way.

Yet fancy will haunt the height
Crowned by that ancient fane,
Where in life's young dream, with a heart still light,
I looked forth on a world so gloriously bright
I shall never look on again.



The Soul, to the Poet.



POET, wandering alone,
Thus conversed 'twixt his soul and him :—
“ This life is but a sickly dream ;
O Soul, say wherefore should it seem
So woebegone ?”

Wherat the Soul, “ Hast thou a sense
Of infinite power to penetrate the shell,
And read what clear benevolence doth dwell
Enshrined within the rudest cell
Of coarse pretence ?

“ Hast thou a spirit-lyre,
All strung with chords, down to the deepest note
That vibrates sympathy with earnest thought,
Which yet thou wouldest untune, to dote
O'er one shrill wire ?”

“ Nay, Soul ! I style this life
Only a bitter, worthless dream,
With rotten kernels rife, that dainty seem,
And friendships colder than the pale moonbeam,—
An aimless strife !

“ At best 'tis but a breath
God gives this being, to express
By eloquence of mute distress
Its own exceeding worthlessness,—
Mere life in death ;

“ And death, the end, so near ;
While here a grave is thinly covered
By daisied sod, and death-o'erhovered ;
And, save by poet's eye discovered,
Grief everywhere !”

“ O Poet, hath thy fancy's play
No greater aim for thy ambition
Than wailing o'er a life-doomed mission,
Urged to a goal of such perdition,
Thy miserere ?

“ Hast thou this gift divine
Only to pierce the church-yard sod,
And see beneath a loathsome clod ;
This life-defacing work of God,
The goal of Time ?

“ The Poet had a sense
Of his prophetic mission in old time ;
A dim foreboding of a power to climb,
And use, as wing for upward flight sublime,
His influence.

“ The old Homeric spirit
Bowed in brave lowliness before the shrine
Of Virtue deified ; and could assign
Elysian honours, by a right divine,
To suffering merit.

“ The spirit of thy time
Crucifies suffering on the anointed rood
Of holy sacrifice ; and—Truth withstood—
Deifies Pleasure, as the highest good
Towards which to climb.”

“ Nay, Soul, thou dost me wrong.
The burden of my saddest wail
Tells Life her search for happiness must fail ;
And bids her aim at the Unsearchable,
On pinion strong.

“ Have I not sung before,—
‘ As an expiring taper is life’s breath,
That for its scanty oil a brief chase hath,
Spasmodic wise, around the socket death,
And is no more’ ?

“ Have I not made each string
Quiver to the instructive measure :—
‘ Life is no theatre for pleasure,
’Tis but the garner of a treasure,
Death’s pilfering ? ”

“ Nay, Soul ! with sense most keen
Of mutability, my lyre hath striven
To woo thee thus, from every life-hold driven,
And lift thy longings after life to heaven,
The life divine ! ”

“ Thou hast ! and in this wise
Hast made me but a mockery of being ;
Me gifting thee with boundless vision, seeing
Life only given for the eternal dreeing
Of the death guise ! ”

“ O Poet, hath the holiness
Of thy prophetic mission lost its power,
That thou shouldst fling aside God’s dower
Of infinite vision, scanning but this hour
Of lowness ? ”

“ That thou wouldest chain me
Down to the wormy dust, thou seest full
Of life’s once sentient vestibule ;
Striving from the eternal beautiful
Thus to detain me ? ”

“ That thou, the many-stringed,
The many-tuned, high-toned poetic lyre,
Wouldst ’minish to one shrill monotonous wire ;
Quenching in melancholy dirge Heaven’s fire,
So lambent winged ?

“ Wouldst thou thyself but try
All rev’rently to sound the highest note
Of my strung chords, such majesty would float
On thy still ear as the earth dreameth not
In minstrelsy.

“ Knowest thou whence I am ?
God made a thing of fearful mystery ;
Thy wondrous body the eternal eye
Beheld, called good, and thence from Deity
Life, His breath, came.

“ Look thou me through,—
Thou lookest on the thing that looks on God ;
His footsteps are around thee, yet abroad
Thou wanderest blind ; Him rightly understood
Thyself shalt know.

“ What is thy mission here ?
Hath not God reared a temple choir in me,
Enshrining there the beautiful to be
The object of thy heart’s idolatry,
Holy in fear.

“ And if this time-life be
An emanation from the Eternal One,
It cannot be, when its far goal is won,
A pilgrimage so wan and woebegone
As thou wouldest see.

“ World’s gold is not thy aim.
Then wherefore sigh, though thee it visit not ?
Theirs an unenviable weal, I wot,
Who make this bubble time their only lot,
This empty name !

“ Is fame thy vainer prize ?
Complainest thou that thy soul’s flower doth wither,
Breathing, unheeded by the world, such treasure
As doth transcend its meed in infinite measure
Of sacrifice ?

“ Or that thou dost delight
A dull ear with a tale of deepest beauty ;
Yet pinest for reward for thy proud duty :
Sharing with charlatans,—strange incongruity,—
Popular slight ?

“ O Poet ! doth the teacher
Ask from the children reckoning of merit ?
Doth he complain if they should disinherit
From the applauding voice, the heiring spirit
Of Beauty’s preacher ?

“Or if they should not even
Strew unavailing wreaths on thy turf heap,
Will a high-judging God less measure keep ?
Or will the lowly daisy fail in worship
Where thy rest’s given ?

“O spirit that dost dwell
A mystery within the poet’s soul,
O’er whom great thoughts from the Almighty roll,
Broad-sighted visions of the whole,
The ineffable !

“Hast not, in thee, a sense
Of an enduring power that reigneth there ;
An infinite will to bear and to forbear ;
A wide, unbounded, still increasing sphere
Of sufferance ?

“Learn thou of Him who came
A minister of infinite light to us,
Of infinite truth, of infinite holiness ;
Yet only won an infinite perfectness,
Suffering shame !

“Lowly bend down and drink,
Drink deeply of the cup, though it be bitter :
Wouldst thou not willingly be found a sitter
Patiently at Truth’s fount until it glitter,
Kissing the brink ;

“Until its calm depths stir
At thy enduring long-spent tarrying,
And, rising, well forth from the anointing spring,
Baptizing thee for holy minist’ring,
Truth’s utterer?

“Then shalt thou see in all
The works of the dear God, a purifying
Through suffering up to strength; aye signifying
This the path for the spirit’s dignifying,
For the immortal.

“What though thy longing eye
Witnesses through me far-off lights that shine,
Luring thee with a beauty all divine,
After which thou dost here so vainly pine
Desiringly:

“Life’s a progressive thing,—
Life finite, and life infinite; see thou
That to the utmost reach of thy sealed vow
Thou aim’st up through the scant scale given thee now
Proudly to sing;

“And from the place thou winn’st
At the hour when thy finite lyre is broken,—
So there be found no truth by thee unspoken,
Nor one withheld of which thou hadst the token,
As thou upspring’st,—

“Even from that upward shrine,
On which thy throbbing wing is folded over,
While the last earth-note on thy lyre shall hover,—
Even from that height, shalt thou beyond discover
One more divine.

“But here be it thy meed
Aye to behold the Deity express
Beauty self-perfected in lowness,
And wear thy wreath with a proud cheerfulness
And even tread ;

“Till thou the goal hast won,
When thou, far-soaring on the limitless sweep
Of the soul’s wing, hast, through the infinite deep
Traversing, found all lapt in beauty’s sleep,—
Press on ! press on !”





In the Night.



N deepest night ; in sore distrust ;
Of hope bereft ; bowed to the dust ;—
God is the doer ; He is just.

Infinite goodness, love, and light ;
Infinite majesty and might ;—
Shall not the Judge of all do right ?

Yet anguish, like a devil's goad,
Will rouse the soul, in rebel mood,
To wrong the righteousness of God,

And cavil at His dread award.
Life's sunshine gone, its summer marred ;
Its heavenly tones to discord jarred ;

Comes a strange, passionate desire
To borrow from the tuneful choir
Of poet-souls the plaintive lyre ;

And utter in the light of day
Thoughts of the night, when doubt had sway,
And hope and coward faith gave way ;

And standing o'er the dust we love,
With graves below, and heaven above,
The veil from off the soul remove :

Arraigning Providence of wrong ;
Or, wildly passive, swept along,
Till suffering find relief in song,

And out of darkness comes forth light,
From anguish peace, from weakness might,
And songs of triumph in the night.

Yet it is in the night ;—with eyes
Blinded with tears, we strive to rise
To sense of higher ministries ;

Till death the mystery unveil
In the new life, and there reveal
The end of God-permitted ill.

For pain is not the birth of crime ;
Creation travailed from the prime,
And death has reigned through countless time.

Where chance the rocky tomb unseals,
And life's long vanished forms reveals
With ravening fangs and plated scales,

All tell, from old, how wrong and pain
Hung pendent from life's golden chain,
Where death fed life, and loss was gain ;

And agony with time began,
And mystery through the ages ran,
Ere suffering grew to worth in man ;

To wean him from his earthly dole,
And lure him to a nobler goal,
Such as might tempt a living soul.

A peerless knight of heavenly birth,
Come to wage battle on this Earth,
Not to its meanness, but his worth ;

With spirit-sword of keenest blade,
In mail, and shield of faith, arrayed ;
Apparelled for the great crusade,

Where heaven and earth, and soul and sense,
And flesh and spirit's influence,
Meet in the shock of battle's fence;

And lists are set, and umpires named,
And God's own angels hold, unclaimed,
The laurels for the undefamed :

Till Death's dread angel shall unveil
Life's higher mystery, and reveal
The end of God-permitted ill ;

And thoughts that troubled in the night
Like ghosts that flee the morning's light
Shall vanish in the strange delight.





Doubt.



HEY ope ! Truth's ancient gates !
A little more, and still a little more,
As did they in your halcyon days of yore,
Ethereal Greece ; Nile-watered Egypt hoar,
Whence history dates.

Slow breaking dawn of day
Emerging from the illimitable, vast,
Incomprehensive universe, the past
So vainly questioned, while the ages last,
Thus ray by ray.

Faith, science, doubt profound,
Searching for ampler knowledge from afar,
By turns have soared to question every star ;
Have probed the earth to tell us whence we are,
And whither bound.

Ask we not even now
The self-same questions uttered by old Nile
To her stone-sphinx, that gazed with stony smile
At Fate's poor questioner,—as she does still
With haughty brow?

Dark-curtained orb of light,
Thus tarrying the hereafter to disclose
Ray upon ray, until the clear dawn grows,
And Truth's great noon in glorious ardour glows
On the soul's sight;

Flinging her blaze abroad,
Above, around, in unencompassed sweep,
Wide as eternity: from out the deep
Of darkness dawning; glowing up the steep,
Lightward to God.

But still we peer and pine
Vainly, with tear-dimmed eyes, for glimpse within
Thy bars; while some blind brother steps between,
Complacently pronouncing doubt a sin,—
A creed divine!

As in its birth hath been
Full many an utterance, a divine impress
And fitting die of the soul's nobleness;
Though now a badge, a form, a worn-out dress,
For fashion ta'en.

And is belief no more?
A thing as facile as a courtier's suit;
To be put on, like bloom of summer fruit,
By the mere sunshine ; fashioned by the moot
Of faction's roar?

Nay ! Give the soul free scope.
To doubt is to inquire, to search, to scan ;
To seek to comprehend the wondrous plan ;
To know, believe, and worship as a man,
With God-like hope.

A faith from God, and so
No thing of measured words and formal creeds ;
But as ethereal as the soul, which feeds
On its pure essence ; and by purest deeds
Proves whence they flow.

Dim, faithless world, roll on
Into thy future ; while the Christ-sown seeds
Grow, not to lifeless words, but living deeds ;
And living souls give utterance thus to creeds
Like to Christ's own.

Soul ! press into the light ;
Strive in the race ; reach upward to the prize ;
Hope ever on ; believing realize :
Till in the great reality hope dies,
And faith is sight.



The Wedding Wine of Galilee.



ITH bleeding heart and trembling feet,
With failing faith and doubts unmeet,
By the river of Death bereaved ones greet.

Is it well with us ? O Thou who drained
This cup of sorrow, Thyself constrained
Thereto by very love unfeigned ;

Help us to say, Lord, it is well,
While on the tears and blood we dwell
. Which in Gethsemane's garden fell.

Divine Consoler, since below
Thyself didst taste such bitter woe,
What wonder if our tears should flow ?

O Thou, whose sacrifice complete
Hath won for Death a sure defeat ;
Thou who by suffering art meet

To bind up every broken heart :
Here darkly we but see in part ;
Teach us to know Thee as Thou art.

Help us, thus blinded by our tears,
To learn, 'mid all our griefs and fears,
What healing wisdom suffering bears.

The cup of which He drank ! yea, think,
Were it not honour thus to drink,
As of that wine by Cana's brink ?

Yet ah ! the rather could it be,
As at that board of Galilee ;
Or at the grave of Lazarus, He—

Or by Nain's widowed bier,—how bless'd,—
Jesus, the mystic wedding guest,
Found wine to cheer life's marriage feast.

Could He, as then, our guest be still ;
Our broken cisterns heal and fill
As once by old Samaria's well ;

Walk the wild waters yet again,
Life's doubts and storms alike arraign ;
Say, "Peace, be still !" to grief and pain.

Oh, bourn of death ! once safe o'er thee,
Through yon gates of pearl are life's healing tree,
And the golden streets, and the crystal sea ;

The robes of white, the triumphal palm,
With the harps of gold and angelic psalm
His redeemed ones sing in the Bridegroom's home.

Ah ! better far Thy guest to be,
And drink of the new wine poured by Thee,
Than of wedding wine of Galilee.

When we taste, and Thy love in its fulness know,
We shall say, " How sweet were its draughts below ;
But Thou hast kept the good wine till now ! "





B u r n s.

" Nature's own beloved bard,
Who to the illustrious of his native land
So properly did look for patronage,
Ghost of Mecænas ! hide thy blushing face !
They snatched him from the sickle and the plough
To gauge ale firkins ! " COLERIDGE.



H for the lightning's fire
To make the muse's lyre resound,
By no angelic pæan vibrating ;
But every thrilling wire
Quivering with remorse profound,
Uttering a sin-repentant nation's offering !

Wild mountain-home of song,
That wrote, in tears of blood, the name
Of Burns, thy proudly-gifted peasant son ;
And rear'st, thy hills among,
The tardy shrine to his undying fame,
To tell, too late, thou foundst his worth—when gone :

Mourn, guilty Scotland, mourn !
Bow to the dust in widowed shame ;
Hide thee in sackcloth, with dishevelled hair ;
But wreath around his urn
No mournful yew,—the laughing thorn, his claim,
Twined with harebell and daisy, let him wear.

Go, sons of England, seek
The temple where your royal dead, among
Nature's nobility, with nobles rest ;
Bid ages' silence break,—
Speak, noble lyrist of "th' adventurous song,"
And tell your recompense, at her behest !

Unveil your Spenser's tomb :
He rests, wrapped in each gorgeous fold
Of his immortal faerie garniture ;
Greenly his laurels bloom,
Yet history blushes when his tale is told,
And vainly hides the cypress wreath he wore.

Strike Dryden's lyre again,—
Whence that deep dirge-note from its chords ?
Repair its broken strings, that we may hear
His unsung fairy strain ;—
Responsive come no music-burdened words,
But echo's dying moan wails on the ear.

Tread yon cathedral aisle,
View sculpture's tribute to your god-like sires,
And boast the glorious birthright of your land :
But cast your thoughts the while
Where the God-born a temple scene inspires ;
Then, guiltless,—cast the stone, your stigma's brand !

O who would strike the lyre,
Charm the world's listless ear to ecstasy,
For guerdon of ingratitude and slight ?
Who would not court its fire
To soar aloft to immortality,
By distant ages owned, the soul of their delight ?

Sleep many-tombed immortal !
Inurned within the hearts of worshippers
That bow with genius' kindred piety :
Thy song has tongues for all,
Thy ministry the patriot flame inspires—
Nature's anointed priest of melody.





Sonnets.

I.



ESEEMS, a form of beauty all divine,
Radiant with Heaven's own light, angelical,
Calls me, with voice most sweetly musical
And winning; wooing to the chase, as
fain
To have me willing follower at her call;
And clasp me to that bosom, where doth shine,
As with the light for which I vainly pine,
The holy, radiant in the beautiful.
Dull soul, abandon the illusive chase;
Dost hope that purity with the impure
Will willingly unite, like kindred race?
Thy too ambitious aim is premature:
Strive thou, yet hope not that it shall be given,—
Beauty divine shall be attained in Heaven.

II.

I stood upon the world's thronged thoroughfare,
And saw her crowds pass by in eager chase
Of bubbles glistening in the morning rays ;
While, overhead, methought God's angels were
With golden crowns, of which all unaware
They heedless crowded on in folly's race.
But yet methought a few were given grace,
With heavenward gaze, to aspire for treasures
there,
All trustfully as an expectant heir ;
Through whom the soul shone, as the body were
But as a veil, wherein it did abide,
Waiting till God's own hand shall it uncover.
O God ! that such a prize in vain should hover
O'er souls in nature to Thyself allied !

III.

Great things were ne'er begotten in an hour ;
Ephemeron in birth, are such in life ;
And he who dareth, in the noble strife
Of intellects, to cope for real power,—
Such as God giveth as His rarest dower
Of mastery, to the few with greatness rife,—

Must, ere the morning mists have ceased to lower
Till the long shadows of the night arrive,
Stand in the arena. Laurels that are won,
Plucked from green boughs, soon wither ; those that
last

Are gathered patiently, when sultry noon
And summer's fiery glare in vain are past.
Life is the hour of labour ; on Earth's breast
Serene and undisturbed shall be thy rest.

IV.

Poet, that wak'st an echo in the soul
That hides in clay, meseems thy mission here
Is not a solitary part to bear ;
And weave thyself a wreath, as though the whole
Of thy clear melody did thence unroll
From out thy quivering heart, till it appear
Like heaven's own sunlight, to this lower sphere
A God-like largess, unrequited dole.
Thou rather art the consecrated herald,
Through whom the voices of thy time speak out :
Great inarticulate thoughts, all unparalleled,
Deep struggling in dumb souls, until unsought
Thou cloth'st the spiritual in visible sense,
And scatterest to all times thought's mighty in-
fluence.

V.

Earth, thou didst wed the noblest of all time
When thou embosomed his immortal dust,
From hands unconscious of the awful trust,
Rendering thee Milton, with the hope sublime
That waiteth on the exit of the just.

O render back the gift ! ambition's lust
Dulls the Poetic Lyre's responsive chime,
Else hath the pregnant age a power that must
Wake its soul, inert as the marble block
Tarrying its life-breath from the sculptor's stroke,
That doth concealed divinity uncover ;
Such keen expectancy the times o'erhover,
As waiting but the touch of genius' lyre
To wake its dumbness into living fire.

VI.

Lightward aspire, nor think the utmost height
Of an attainable success is won ;
Nor even that the mighty spirits, gone
With the bright past, in their enduring flight
So won their passage toward the infinite,
That they may stand on their far heights
alone,

A distant glory dazzling to the sight,
In which all hope of mastery is o'erthrown.
No height of daring is so high, but higher
The earnest soul may yet find grace to climb ;
Truth springeth out of truth ; the loftiest flier,
That soareth on the sweep of thought sublime,
Resteth at length ; and still beyond doth guess
Truth infinite as God toward which to press.

VII.

Cromwell ! a great name, destined yet to rise
Like the broad sun, above the sluggish damp
That veiled its dawning ; destined yet to stamp
Its impress on us, when we learn to prize
His soul's true brightness, as a burning lamp
That flared no marsh-light 'mid the dreary
swamp
Of faithless kingcraft ; but for great emprise
Rose clear above the dust of battle's tramp ;
And saw afar the end ; and calmly trod
The long dark vista, with the light beyond
That made the great goal whither he was
bound,
Of liberty, shine like the eye of God
Looking into the darkness. What to him
The gloom that added splendour to the gleam ?

VIII.

Life's brief working day at morn is done ;
Calm thou sleepest, dreaming of no wronger.
Thou hadst wings, but that the flesh was
stronger,
And balked the soul's aspirings to be gone
Into thought's boundless deep ; thy soul no
longer
Yearneth, all bodiless to soar alone,
Counting Earth's love too shallow to atone,—
Its bounds too narrow, for the spirit's hunger.
Now thy body, like a faithful maiden,
Bideth in its narrow bed, content,
Till God's angels, for its waking sent,
Come with bridal benedictions laden :
And the marriage of the soul shall see
Flesh alike assume an infinite purity.

IX.

True love is lowly as the way-side flower,
That springeth up beneath the traveller's tread,
And lifteth trustfully its lovely head,
Content to bless therewith the passing hour ;
Unheedful of the wealth of heavenly dower
It lavisheth upon a path bestead

With the coarse trafficking for sordid meed,
So it lie open but to sun and shower.
And love no less deals with unstinted hand :
Lavish to others, heedless of reward ;
Deeming no sacrifice of self too hard,
So that, with fruitful arms outspread, she stand
Sowing around home's hearth her harvest treasure :
Heart's hoards of golden grain, showered down in
affluent measure.

X.

True liberty is still the birth of time,
And springeth up, for all that tyrants whet
Their pitiful ingenuity, to fret
The bud upshooting through the frosty rime ;
That, for their pruning, doth the higher climb,
Spreading a leafy bower, wherein, elate,
The world shall yet rejoice, as consecrate
To virtues flourishing therein sublime.
Quit ye as men, be true then, who would fight
In this so holy cause ; think ye a soul
Weighed down by beggarly lusts, can have a right
To urge God's ark of freedom to its goal ?
They must be holy who 're ordained to be
The high priests of a people's liberty.

XI.

Nile's pyramids the Alpine heights beside ;
Lone Staffa's aisle 'gainst proud cathedral's claim ;
Or lily of the field arrayed to shame
Some gorgeous spectacle of kingly pride ;
Or nature against art, in every frame
Of fancy's livery, marshalled to defame
Man's handiwork : may still be turned aside,
Discerning in his art some loftier aim.
And if the everlasting hills uprear
Cloud-steeps that slumber 'neath eternal snows,
Hold not those lowlier piles a life that glows
Within their visible life ; an inner sphere
Of olden history, which marches down,
Peopling man's homeliest marts with scenes of old
renown ?

—
XII.

The shady lane, the hedgerow, and the wood,
And ripening fields, have won the poet's heart,
Until the love of nature is a part
Of his soul's being. Yet own I the mood
That seeks out nature in the crowded mart ;
Nor thinks the poet's teaching unwithstood,
Because, within the thicker solitude

Of peopled cities, fancy plays its part.
“Man made the town,” and therefore fellow-man
May garner there, within its dusky lanes
Of pent-up life, an airy empyrean,
Dwelling apart, in sympathy, where wanes
The light of present being, while the vast
“Has been” awakes again,—the being of the past.

XIII.

Hoar relic of the past, whose ancient spire
Climbs heavenward amid the crowded mart,
Keeping, as 'twere within the city's heart,
One shrine where reverent thoughts may yet
retire ;
And dreaming fancies, from the world apart,
Wander among old tales of which thou art
Sole relic ! is it vain that we inquire
Somewhat of scenes where thou hast borne a
part ?
Mine own St. Giles ! Old fashions have gone by,
And superstitions, even of the heart ;
Thyself hast changed some wrinkles for a smart
New suit of modern fashion. To my eye
The old one best beseemed thee ; yet the more
Cling I to what remains, the soul of yore.

XIV.

A silver stream, as in the days of yore,
When the old hermit of the neighbouring cell
Blessed the clear waters of St. Anton's Well ;
And yon gray ruins, on whose grassy floor
The lambkins browse, rung out the matin-bell,
Whose voice upon the neighbouring city fell,
Waking up 'mong its crowds old hearts that wore
Griefs like our own ; sounding to one a knell
Of ruined hopes, the while another heeds
To joyful music of his marriage morn.
Up yon steep cliff how oft light steps have borne
The wedding or the christening train ! where weeds
So long have grown the chapel altar stood,
And daily pilgrims knelt before the Holy Rood.

—
XV.

Thus fashions change, while Nature is the same ;
The altar gone,—the chapel's crumbling walls
O'erlooking there the Stewarts' ancient halls,
Deserted all and drear ; with but the fame
Of buried glories giving them a name :
Where yet the past as with a spell inthrals
The wanderer's fancy, wrapt in musing dream
Of ancient story, helping it to frame

Old scenes in yon gray aisles, when mass was sung,
While Mary — hapless queen — knelt low the
while;

And thrilling chants and incense filled the aisle ;—
Vain dream !—Of all that there so fondly clung,
Nought save the daisy and the blue harebell
Breathe their old incense by St. Anton's Well.

XVI.

As Faith's old tide-marks on Time's confluent
stream,

Meseems each reverent spire and belfry tower
Uprising through the murky wreaths that lower,—
Blackening the town below,—to catch the gleam
Of the sun's dawn, and wait his westering beam
As theirs by centuries' prescriptive dower,
Whose memories hang around them as a dream
Of faith's like changing, yet unfailing power.
Ring for each dying creed a parting peal ;
Welcome the living one with joyous chime,
To stir to loving deeds a living time,
Even while your tapering summits heavenward
steal,
As, hourly warning us of time undone,
You point still skyward 'neath its westering sun.

XVII.

Ring on your joyous peals while ages past
Give place to new ; and ringers, weary worn,
Quit your hoar belfry-tower, for whom no morn
Returns with matin chime. Events more vast
Than all the past are waiting to be born ;
And prouder wreaths are weaving to be worn :
As purer aims their victories forecast
In luminous evolutions from the bourn
Of coming generations ; proud to own
Sires who,—like true to liberty and faith,
Wav'ring not when fidelity was death,—
Bequeathed to us the harvest they had sown ;
And handed on the glorious gifts they drew
From elder times, untarnished to the new.

XVIII.

Childhood, that looketh onward as it goes,
With all its little world spread out before ;
And of its pleasures makes as little store
As lambkins of the flowers on which they browse ;
Nor sighs doth squander on the days of yore,
Knowing no treasured memories to explore ;
Nor hopes, nor fears, nor longings for repose,
Save such as angel watcher o'er thee throws,

Communing with thy innocent delight :
Seeing, as in the depths of thy clear eye,
And listening for the hidden melody,
Unsounded yet : the mystery and might
Of the soul's harmonies ; the discord, too,
Jarring its heavenly notes : alas, too few !

XIX.

It seems as though the movements of bright
wings

Yet fanned thee in thy sleep ; as though the
sense

Of heavenly memories blended with the intense
Reality of earth and earthly things ;
And heavenly watchers wandered in suspense
Round those new portals, where, for dalliance,
Earth brings the roses, while the thorn still clings,
Though veiled as yet, and fragrant to the sense.

My babe, between the cherub that thou art,
And what thou shalt be, lie untrodden deeps,
Which thou must cross alone. The watcher weeps,
Even at the heavenly gate, to see thee part
From thy bright wings ; yet, child of Earth, look
higher ;

Love shall uphold thee, so thou wilt aspire.

XX.

Waiting for liberty!—as though the night
Of slavery were a starry one; and day
Sent on his harbinger, and on the way
Were heard his wheels. God spake, and there was
light;

But if He speak not, and His chariot stay,
Think ye who listless tarry for the ray,
Nor rise to plead His aid, that e'er the right
Of a determined people could delay?
Aye trust in God; yet strive as God were not;
And agonizing for the birth-right given
By the unerring testament of Heaven,
Even as for compt of promises forgot:
So trust and wait;—as warrior leaders eye
The battle-field, in strife for victory.

XXI.

Enter not lightly! Know ye not the place
Where ye would tread upon is holy ground?
There tend, unseen, the messengers of grace
The faltering footsteps of one heavenward bound,
On o'er the threshold of eternity;
And in that little shrine events unfold
Angels in highest heaven with joy behold,

And for which God assumed humanity.
A monarch, too, is there, with terror crowned ;
And yet that frail girl calmly looks around,
As of those visitants e'en now aware,
Fresh from the heavenly courts, that wait to bear
Her fainting spirit where angelic feet
Tread on the golden flagging of the street.

XXII.

A pensive wanderer along life's way,
Pausing, irresolute which side to turn,
Was beckoned by a maiden to delay,
And with her lute to charm away the day
In pleasant dalliance, where a murmuring burn
Aimless, meandering, kissed the o'erhanging
spray,
And lured, through flowering bank and mead,
astray
Far from life's road beset with rock and thorn.
But as he turned to follow, sorrowing Love
In passing, softly whispered in his ear,
Nor looked behind ; whereat he 'gan to move
As with redoubled speed, nor paused to hear
The charmer's lute, but with a resolute will
He bent his eager steps to climb the thorny hill.

XXIII.

A gloomy cloud begirt me all around,
Wherein, when I had sought to penetrate,
Methought were steps ascending from the ground,
Whereon the cloud lashed with monotonous
sound.

Rude iron seemed they, where my feet did grate
Harsh discord, as I clomb the steps, inwound
By that murk pall, that as with ponderous weight
Opened on rusty hinge its sullen gate :
Whereon, in gloom enthroned, a spirit sate,
Presiding over mercenary toil ;
Myriads of willing slaves around did wait
On his stern eye, as trading for a smile ;
Yet at his feet, when I had gazed a while,
Methought Love sate, well pleased to consecrate
their guile.

XXIV.

Farewell, fond Lyre : to win thy mastery
I have not dared aspire ; thee rather ta'en
In wayward moods, to soothe a passing pain :
Deep, incommunicable thoughts, in sigh
Across thy strings breathing wild minstrelsy ;
A melody, as uncontrolled and vain

As when the wind Æolian chords would try
In random sweep,—but how melodiously !
Bearing a gush of music as intense
As the deep blue it hides in, into night.
With as deep fervour—would with as keen sense
Of thy sweet voice !—I see thee quit my sight :
O Lyre, because world's care is taking me
So firm a hold, art thou forsaking me ?

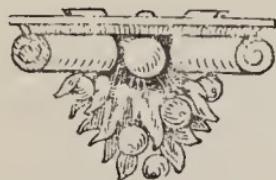
XXV.

Once more, and then for ever to be free
From thy proud servitude, O Lyre divine !
From the ennobling path thou dost assign,
As earnest to thy lowliest votary,
Treading, all reverently, the path where be
The foot-prints—nay, the soul-prints of the free !
Ah, henceforth from thy soothing must I flee,
Nor at the bitter orphanage repine.
Come world's care, since Love be thy harbinger,
I'll give thee all the allegiance I do owe
To Love's dear mastery : thou shalt henceforth
know
No heart-divided service ; I shall wear
Thy livery, nor deem that badge a shame,
Home consecrates by Love's own holy name.

XXVI.

But yet forgive, if tearfully I say,
Break thou, fond Lyre, as thus I dash along
The strings that erst have lisped my heart's low
song;

Where oft my spirit held unconscious play,
Until care's haunting brood would glide away,
Beguiled of cruelty, thy chords among;
Break thou, and with thee many a passion strong,
Whose liberty within thy sufferance lay.
The donjon wherein slumbering, earnest thought,
Hath lain imprisoned, waiting till the token
Of thy responsive echoes should be caught,
Is locked, and thou, the master-key now broken,
Hast made thereof its sepulchre ;—O spell !
O mystery of song ! I bid thee sad farewell !





The Wraith Bridal.

A BALLAD.



PART I.

“ IGHT down, light down, Lord Edward, I pray,
An’ let our parting be done ;
For what would proud Ladye Margaret say
To her vassal-wedded son ?

“ Now light ye down frae your bonny steed,
An’ let this our parting be ;
For bluidy I trow is the Rosslyn bed
For a maiden o’ low degree.”

“ Na, get ye up, my bonny, bonny Maye,
Nor fear for my mother’s frown ;
An’ ye’s be a gallant earl’s ladye
Or e’er the sun gae down.

“ An’ ye’ll be decked wi’ goud sae brave,
 To tread in Rosslyn ha’:
 An’ shine my bride, out o'er the lave,
 The fairest o’ them a:”

“ But lippen still, my Lord Edward dear,—”
 “ I’ll lippen to nought enow ;
 My steed’s maist swift, an’ my Maye maist fair
 In braid Scotland, I trow.

“ The priest he bides at St. Mary’s Kirk,
 That sall buckle my ain sweet Maye ;
 Say ride ye now, an’ afore it’s mirk,
 You’re my ladye for ance and aye.”

“ Stay, Edward, Lord Edward ; my heart is sair,
 An’ winna be bidden gay ;
 For I dreamt yestreen that we met ance mair,
 But only to part for aye,

“ I dreamt when we met, ye’r bright blue een
 Looked siccar an’ kind as now ;
 But ere we parted, their light was gane,
 An’ the flesh frae ye’r chapless mou’,”

“ Hut tut, hut tut, my Maye sae dear,
 Let the wise woman rede ye’r saye—”

“ Na, na, Lord Edward ; the woman I fear
 Is ye'r mother, that proud ladye !

“ An' aye as I dream o' ye'r bonny steed,
 An' my lover, wi' look sae glad,
 Its milk-white sides are a' smeared wi' bluid,
 An' its rider in shroud yclad.

“ Sae this night alane maun my ain dear ride,
 An' I'll bide a maiden still ;
 For wae were't if ane sae warned to bide,
 Wouldna fend her ain lover frae ill.

“ Sae bidna me ride this night at least,
 For my heart is dool an' wae ;
 And again our Ladye I'll pray to bless't,
 An' the morrow I'll surely gae.”

“ Sair, sair am I loath to leave my bride,
 But the morrow it e'en maun be ;
 Sae bide ye for what the morn betide,
 That sall make ye my gay ladye.”

“ Now blessings gae wi' my ain Edward,
 An' light be his heart an' ha' ;
 But muckle I dread the kirk-yard sward
 Is the dool that will befa'.

“ An’ what were a ladye without her lord,
 Though in silk an’ goud a’ clad ?
 Or waefu’ bride wi’ her lover cauld
 In the mous o’ the kirk-yard laid ? ”

He has lighted down frae his milk-white steed,
 An’ gripped her lily hand ;
 An’ a bonnier couple, I trow, to meet,
 Ye might seek far in braid Scotland.

They hae parted as only lovers part,
 An’ swiftly he’s sped awa’ ;
 But sair’s the foreboding that wrings her heart,
 An’ bitter the tears that fa’.

PART II.

SHE has been sin’ the sun, frae the lift sae heigh,
 Has wan to the gloamin’ gray ;
 She has watched until the moon, frae laigh,
 On the crown o’ the pine-taps lay.

An’ sair I trow was her leal, true heart,
 An’ aft wi’ a tear she’d say,
 “ Oh, Edward, dear ! did we yestreen part
 To be parted for ever an’ aye ? ”

Yet she bided still, till the mirk midnight,
Though the moon o'er the trees gaed down ;
An' aye as she listened, she'd try to light
Her heart wi' some gleesome croon.

But just as the mirk night's noon was come,
She kent her ain lover's tread ;
An' eftsoon she spied through the murky gloom
The glint o' his milk-white steed.

"Now mount ye, mount ye, my Maye," he said ;
But wow, he was pale an' wan ;—
"Oh, tell me what waefu' gate ye gaed,
An' what dreesome weird's befa'n?"

But "Mount ye ! mount ye !" was a' he said,
An' she's mounted, an' aff they flee ;
But caulder aye, as they onward rade,
Did her lover seem to be.

"An' whar ride ye sae swift, Edward ?
An' why so late at e'en ?"
But never another word she heard,
But "Whar ye s'ould yestreen."

An' on they rade, and still rade on,
Till they cam' to St. Mary's Quire ;

But I trow the kirk through the mirk night shone
 As though it had been afire!

—

“ Now light ye down, my Maye,” he said,
 “ For here maun our bridal be ;
 But ye’ll match na sicken a bridal bed,
 I trow, in Christendie !”

He’s ta’en her aff his milk-white steed,
 An’ into braw Rosslyn’s aisle ;
 But waesome an’ wild is the shriek she gied,
 An’ her bonny cheek deadly pale.

For weel she saw ‘twas nae earthly light
 That shone frae each fretted wa’,
 O'er weel she kent, frae what met her sight,
 St. Clair’s proud heir lay low.

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A’ bluidy, smeared in his leal heart’s bluid,
 Whar his bride s’ould been yestreen ;
 An’ a’ bluidless, beside the weel-lo’ed dead,
 Was fand the fair Maye lain.

Ladye Margaret had sworn they souldna meet,
 An’ bluidy’s the byde she’s ta’en ;

But true to the tryst his Maye had set,
His Wraith to its keeping's gaen.

They've laid thegither in holy Rosslyn,
As they fand, the dead-wed pair ;
But still when a chief o' St. Clair is gane,
In Rosslyn is seen that glare.





Henry Hudson.



HE bark outspread its swelling sails,
The icebergs floated past,
And the gallant chief on the stormy deep
A dauntless eye o'ercast.

And shall I bide a craven's beck?
Yield what I dare, to fear;
And bear an unaccomplished vow,
Forsworn for coward's tear?

Ho! seamen look! the captain said,
And threw the chart adown;
I would not change this quarter-deck
For England's jewelled crown!

Ho! see, my men, an hundred leagues
The billows lag behind,

That e'er were pierced by other prow,
Careering on the wind !

The furrowed ocean lies behind,
Unfurrowed deeps before ;
Say ! will ye leave for others' ears
The music of their roar ?

The mystery of ages stirs,
To meet us on the main ;
Men of yon island, shall it wake
To beckon you in vain ?

Peril and danger pave the path
Of victory beyond ;
Shame and dishonour never yet
A Briton's brow hath bound.

But fear within, with ague gripe,
Tugged nervous at each heart ;
And they slunk abashed at guilty thoughts,
Ere will to the deed depart.

They slunk abashed ! but ere morning broke
To welcome the coming sun,
Treachery among them had wove his curse,—
They were villains every one.

Adrift on the lone deep sea he's cast,—
'Twas a mighty grave to find ;
The ship is alone with its guilty crew,—
It shudders to meet the wind.

* * * *

Twelve nights have passed, yet that bark has flown
Hurrying before the wind,
With staggering mast, as though terror told
An avenging one behind.

Sure the ghost of Hudson is haunting them,
It follows in their wake ;
A scowl, as from hunger's maniac eye,
Seems in every wave to break.

The spirit returns at each midnight hour,
It beckons the vessel on ;
Each stood aghast, for in living doom,
He felt himself alone.

They wasted before the pestilence,
The famine, the curse of blood ;
'Twas a hell upon the living sea,
That quenched not with its flood :

It was not death, it is not life,
A dark unburying grave ;

Where the wicked from no troubling cease,
On that unwearying wave.

But still where the river Hudson finds
Bold passage to the sea,
Though cities have sprung, where his eye beheld
The waves of the forest tree ;

And still round the coasts of the icy North,
In that chill abyss of storms,
The seaman beholds 'mid the dim sea-mists,
A bark and phantom forms.

The demon crew are their villain souls,
Its light is the hurricane's gloom ;—
Till judgment shall summon us all to account,
They shall dree their terrible doom.

But woe to the ship that shall cross their track,
As to judgment they hurry on !
For none eye that freight of unshiven sin,
But are doomed to be undone.

Sure the foul Fiend was of that dastard crew,
Ere they dreamt of such a crime :
The good Lord from evil deliver our souls,
Lest doom should bide its time.



Earth and Sea.



ITTETH the green Earth and hearkeneth to the
Sea,

Ever as its moaning waves croon lullabie ;

Ever as its troubled waves ask : "Earth!
Earth !

Where wert thou, mother auld, afore my birth ?

What wert thou then, and what wilt thou be

In the coming time o' Eternitie ?"

Answereth the Earth to the vexed Sea :

" I was a maiden afore I bore thee ;

In the formless void, where nae sun had shone,

I was a maiden, and dwelt all alone ;

As like to sic home as a babe could be

Fresh come frae the womb o' Eternitie."

" An' what didst thou, in thy long, lone home ? "

Answereth the green Earth : " Long did I roam ;

But Eternitie's wider than Chaos's pall ;
An' God's eye's above, and his hand 'neath all ;
And I heard far-off sounds that whispered to me
In the crooning chimes o' Eternitie.

" An' the life divine was aye brooding o'er me,
Till Time woke frae dreaming when I bore thee.
Within th' eerie caves o' thy dark, deep womb,
Strange types o' being fand kindly home,
Till in forms o' beauty young life gat free
Frae the lone, lang dream o' Eternitie.

" But life, frae the guile o' thy fretful wave
Wrought death, and o' life's womb made its grave ;
Till it moved in a cycle where death maun be
The nursling o' life's futurity ;
And its shadows fell atween God and me,
Like Chaos returned frae Eternitie.

" But God wrought on, as it aye maun be,
Till life grew to knowledge, and love, and lee ;
An' woman's smile glinted on a' abroad ;
An' man stood erect in the image of God ;
An' e'en the Creator was pleased to see
Sic a wean frae the womb o' Eternitie.

" But sorrow o'ergrew the life divine,
And death crept ance mair in wi' deadly dwine,

An' evil an' sin, in undreamt-of forms :
Till thy waters raise in God's anger-storms ;
An' life frae garden, and wood, and lea,
Dwaumed back to the womb o' Eternitie.

" But fret as thou wilt, thou lone, vexed Sea ;
Aft hae I sorrowed since I bore thee ;
Aft hae I mourned like a mother wud
Since thou swept thy oyes in God's angry flood ;
And learned, in thy charnel caves, to dree
The weird o' Death's har'st frae Eternitie.

" But His image, though sin-marred, still was mine,
Till God's self, in that image, took death's propyne ;
An' gloriously bright were the things foretauld,
When a' that's grown false, an' impure, an' auld,
Shall have passed away ; and sae life shall dree
Nae death to part Time frae Eternitie.

" Chafe on, and dash up thy chill, white spray
Bairn o' my sorrow, in thy mad, wild way ;
But when ance time's darg o' mystery,
And this pain, and evil, and death I maun dree,
And thou fretting, unresting, storm-vexed sea,
Are a' gane wi' forgotten Eternitie,
God and man shall bide on, unvexed, wi' me,
With new heavens and new earth—but nae mair
Sea."



The Sabbath Bell.



ARK ! 'tis the lark at morn
Soaring to greet the sun,
Upborne on the thrilling ecstasy
That lowly was begun.
The flowers around are still,
Holy, and hushed, and quiet ;
On mead and hill they have drunk their fill,
And with dew are satisfied,—
Hush ! hark ! the Sabbath Bell !

The wind is in the trees,
Lightly it tunes their boughs ;
Trilling a grateful matin-hymn,
The little birds rejoice :
The corn-fields, as in sympathy,
Wave back a sweet amen,

Ever as flees the returning breeze
From its wood-lute back again,
With sound of the Sabbath Bell.

The streamlet from the hill
Leaps on o'er rock and stone;
O'er its pebbly bed in the vale below,
Gladly it murmurs on ;
Through the sedgy banks, where bend
The willow's silvery sprays,
Plaintive and low, where the rushes grow,
It murmurs a hymn of praise,
While echoes the Sabbath Bell.

The morning beams dispert
Through the thickly-matted spray ;
And sparkling by that reedy bank,
Dart dragon-flies at play ;
The praise of myriad life
Through the sentient ether rings :
Holy and deep is the time they keep,
With the music of throbbing wings,
Answering that Sabbath Bell.

The foliage interweaves
A bower amid the trees ;
Scarce can the sunlight steal therein,
Tracking the lagging breeze ;

Yet there the voice of praise
Ascends unto the sky ;
In gleeful bands, they clap their hands,
These clustering leaves on high,
To the sound of the Sabbath Bell.

The nestling buds unrobe,
To join in the living praise ;
And hand in hand, in sunny band,
Are daucing the light green sprays;
While far within the wood,
Solemn, and hushed, and still,
As in secret prayer, the large boughs there
Bend o'er the murmuring rill,
As if hearing that Sabbath Bell.

Like stately ships, the clouds
Move through the azure deep,
Noiseless, with white fringe to the sun,
As a maid that walks in sleep ;
Streaking the vale below,
Shadows steal o'er the scene ;
While entranced I lie, 'neath the summer sky,
With its robes of silver sheen,—
And list to that Sabbath Bell.

Afar on the restless main,
Tossed by the wind and wave,

The seaman is rushing before the blast,
 Beneath him a watery grave :
 Fear not, thou lonely bark !
 His presence is on the deep,
 Who, though tempests frown, shall still them
 down,
 As a cradled child, asleep,—
 Though thou hear'st no Sabbath Bell.

The blue wave round thy bark
 Flings heavenward its foam,
 While the petrel and the albatross
 Find on its breast a home.
 Is not that heaving main
 Free highway for the world ?
 O'er that stormy deep goes the mission ship
 With the gospel flag unfurled,
 To wake new Sabbath Bell.

Nature rejoices all,
 And shall not men the same ?
 Will not that God who clothes the grass,
 More surely care for them ?
 Will not He hear thy prayer,
 Breathed forth in faltering words ?
 Will He despise that sacrifice
 A broken heart affords ?—
 Answer, thou Sabbath Bell,

In hamlets scattered wide,
Far up the wooded glen ;
On the distant hill's green side,
That echo wakes again :
And the children of the land
That has heard the gospel sound,
List to that bell as a holy spell
That bids them gather round
The church, with its Sabbath Bell.

The lord of yon wide domain
Owns the same holy sway ;
The peasant assumes his plaid and
staff,
And wends to the church pathway ;
Nor child disowns the call,
Matron, nor guileless maid :
Is not God's hand on the happy land,
In summer pride arrayed,
With its holy Sabbath Bell ?

Thanks to Thee, Lord of Life,
That in Britain's favoured isle,
Where ages have seen, and yet shall see,
Yon consecrated pile,
Thou hast cast my happy lot,
And as Sabbath-days come round,

Still to Thy courts the crowd resorts
To hear the gospel sound,—
At the call of the Sabbath Bell.

O God of heaven's courts,
Nature with holy lays
Lifts up one sweet, united voice,
To sing its Maker's praise ;
But he for whom Thy hand
This curious tissue wove,—
Deaf to the voice that bids rejoice,
Praising Thee, God of love,—
Heeds not the Sabbath Bell.

O Thou who on this day
Said to the sick, Be whole ;
Thou who the darkened eye gave light,
Spake peace unto the soul !
Lord of the Sabbath, come ;
In quickening power make known
To the living-dead on what love they tread,
What heritage disown,—
Slighting that Sabbath Bell.

It sounds from the old church-tower,
Where the dead lie all around ;—
The dust of the generations past
Crumbles beneath each mound ;

Ring on, thou Sabbath Bell !
The dead no waking fear ;
All hushed and deep is their dreamless sleep :
They will not wake to hear
The voice of the Sabbath Bell.

And remaineth there no rest,
Nor Sabbath of holy love,
For those who from care are sunk to sleep,
As still as the nestling dove ?
Yes, doubting and weary one :
Free from sin's burdening load,
There remaineth above, secured by His love,
A rest for the people of God.—
Ring on, thou Sabbath Bell !





The Dial.



IGHT and th' unresting Earth
Move, while yon dial stands 'neath cloud
and sun,
Prompt with its shadow-finger, save in
dearth

Of its coy mate ; with whom it seeks to run
Its wedded course, with many a goodly son,
And measured time, and matron duty done.

Life and th' unresting Mind
Speed in their course through shadow and through
light ;
Striving far goals of luring pride to find :
Or power, or wealth, or worth ; as the delight
Of sense or soul aspires : and life moves on
Lightward or graveward, as its star has shone.

Thus Time and Life make note :

Time throws his shadow o'er Life's dial-style ;
With deep-cut scar that may not be forgot
He graves the hour, pointing to it the while ;
And sternly whispers, in each passing breath,
The only certainty in Life is—Death !





Puck.



ARK, away !
Wouldst fly with me ?
Tread 'mid the maze of our nether halls,
Where the ruby's ray
And the blazing gaze of the diamond's eye
On the fairy revel falls ?
Mortals ! mortals !
That may not be !
The raftered roofs of the old oak halls
Rung, till each sculptured nook
With eldritch laughter shook,
When our airy train to the dais took ;
And the feast was spread by our grammaire,
And the Baron repaid for our glee
By the old oak hall's festivity.
But not with me, mortals ;
Mortals, not now with me ;

Oberon still rules our halls below ;
But, nor child of mid-earth now heeds our call,
Nor Christian knight in our courts we see ;
Nor our train, where the star-eyed dew gems glow,
Tread the wild maze of the Morris through.

I have lurked where the bat flitted stealthily
Round the eerie haunts of the olden time,
But I met, of our train not one ;
But still when aloft on the deep night sky
The storm, wrapped in murky robes, wold climb,
Then I haunt the waste alone :
Still, hither and thither I glance my light
To the wandering wight, who seeks the waste,
Till I hear his groan.
When the flash is gone, and the murky night
Blots out the star's last glint in haste,
Then rare is my mirth ; such sport, I ween,
As is rarely seen on the dull mid-earth.

But I've sought in vain, where the oak boughs'
shade
Our pavilion made in the forest faue ;
Though the flashing brook still murmured on,
The harebell shook, and the glow-worm shone ;
And the wood's wild music around was heard,
As the zephyr's breath through the foliage crept,
And kissed each trembling spray ;

Till the folds of its rich green mantle stirred,
And awoke the soul of sounds that slept,
As it swept through the glade away ;
And each whispered note was a voice that told
Where the fairies of old their revels sought.
I listened in vain for their bridles ringing,
I heard not aught but the wood-flowers springing ;
And the tender grass, as it drank the dew,
Sigh as the soft night-breeze stole through.

The daisy opened her crimson cup,
And the night-stock breathed her rich fragrance up
In modest plaint of the Sun's fierce glare,
Whose impassioned stare made her sweet breath faint.
But they greeted nought but the coy maid Moon,
That, methought, as she sought so curiously
Within each shady nook to pry,
'Mid the mossy tufts, and the violets' scent,
Seemed sadly to ask, "Are the fays all gone?"
But she saw not aught but the dreaming bee,
Or the dragon-fly slumbering stealthily,
Or the butterfly lapped, where the fox-glove bell
Hung a rich tent for its nightly cell.
The sheep-dog's baying was far on the hill ;
E'en the nightingale seemed to have sung her fill,
And but carolled a brief song, and then was still.
The glow-worm had slunk to the perfumed shade
That the clustered leaves of the violet made :

And e'en in the dreamer's enchanted scene
There was less of the wild grotesque, I ween,
Than Mab's elf-sprites should of old have seen.
So I dived again to the diamond halls,
'Mid the ruby's glow,
Where the emerald's ray still gaily falls
To light, to-night,
Our eldrich mirth below;
And dull be the sprite that seeks for delight
In aught the wan Moon can show.





Ane Lover's Address to Dan Cupid.



OST worshipful Dan Cupid, posture-master ;
Prime dancer in the jig of life's third stage ;
Physician ; curer, without salve or plaster,
Of shattered hearts ; and cooper of them faster
Than quacks' quintessential pufferies engage ;
When swain's vile cobbling botches his disaster,
Thou art the rage !

Then, most unworshipful, jack-ketching slaughterer ;
Heart-splitting pickpocket of mortals' wits ;
Fixing vain victim's soul on some Eve's daughter, or
Fair Jezebel, that jilts, and makes him waterer
Of lawn or silk, in fatal blubbering fits ;
Vowing swift end in steel, or bowl, or halter, or
Like gift to Fates !

Thou coiner of mad rhymes for' madder rhymer,
Ycleped sonnets to some mistress' eyebrow ;

'Rainbow divine !' so long as such beau reign her
Puissant ladyship's heart's sole retainer ;

'Most high and mighty arch,' until some sly bow
Most archly dropt, a new bow-string to gain her ;
Then down as low !

Malicious Harlequin ; curst roguish fellow
In motley suit ; some pity spare for once,
For weary wight, in weeds beneath the willow,
For lack of poesy's sweet flowers to fill,—oh !

Pray grin not at me ; but now on the nonce
Just hit a sonnet off to Bella's eyebrow,
Shall win her glance !

She squints, you know,—most hideously 'tis certain ;
Most beauteously, I rather meant to say :
Her shoulder's hump to some might seem diverting ;
But she has virtues, such slight things converting
To charms :—she's ninety,—may not live a day,
So pray now bid her,—(there is gold to gain !)
Just squint this way !

Why so disdainful, heart's love-heat diviner ?
Wouldst leave sad suppliant in despair to die ?
Thou couldst, wouldst thou but favourably incline her
To squint sweet smile upon her hopeless piner :
What sayst ?—thou'rt Love's, not Fortune's deity ?
What other is my suit, but Cupid's serving, or
Cupid-ity ?



Wild Flowers.

I.

WILTED FLOWERS.



ANDER, ye memories of the past, thought's
shreds,
Stark with the ghosts ye freight of dreamt
reünions,
To make vain restitution to the dead !
Like wilted flowers, adrift with quickening life
For other lives, though lifeless for their own ;
And odorous breath, more exquisite than life.
Speak in the sighing of your carrier winds,
Yet very softly, as to baby ears :—
Hast heard no whisper, in thy weary travel,
Of any dawn ? O flowers, if Winter be
As passionate as ye say, and bitter keen,
Be sure he hears the footsteps of the Spring !

II.

WITHERING FLOWERS.

No more ! O never more
Shall ye scent the air
With your fragrant breath ;
Your sunny life is o'er,
And your winding-sheet so fair,
Winter spreads o'er the green turf, where,
Withering, ye sweetly lie, in the arms of Death !

No more ! O never more
Shall the lark his quivering wing
Stoop, till he sip your dew ;
Or the bee for his store
To your fragrant chalice cling,
Distilling sweets for his winter's revelling ;
Death shall alone alight, your leaves to strew.

No more ! O never more
Shall the sister band
Of the petaled rose
Join in a group to cluster o'er
And bend with the breeze, all hand in hand,
As each blushing cheek by the breeze is fanned :
Wide scattered ye lie, for your last repose.

No more ! O never more
Shall the early friends—
Life's bloom in spring—return ;
They upon whom warm hearts set store ;
They on whom silent memory tends,
And o'er their tomb with affection bends :
Their bloom is all withered, their leaves death-torn.

What would we ? What would ye here,
Dear yearning hearts
And withering flowers ?
Ye tell us of an eternal sphere ;
A land where the chill frost never smarts,
Where love from the loved one never parts ;
Whose flowers ever bloom in unfading bowers.

III.

THE BUD.

My Babe, wert thou entranced
Amid the burning row of Seraphim
That sing the songs of Heaven—
That thou but glanced
An all too lovely dream,
Bright as the flaming levin,

Lovely as bright! then swift returned
To take thy station where on high
Their angel spirits ever see His face?
None less for me thy light hath burned,
A star in the deep blue of memory,
That shineth clear, and ever in its place!

IV.

THE FLOWER UNBLOWN.

LAY her all gently in the mould,—
O wherefore mourn her gone?
How could so fair a flower unfold
In the soil Death trod upon?
Why o'er the daisied hillock weep?
Dreamless and sweet is our baby's sleep.

O fragrant as the south wind's breath,
That dreams in the leafy trees,
With the violet's kisses, all faint to death—
Are her storied memories.

Dear Lord, thou hast beckoned our darling hence;
Teach us therein love's recompense.

V.

THE ASTER.

"Thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth
on men."—JOB iv. 13.
—

A TRANCE as of grisly death came fast
Across my throbbing brain :
Meseemed as the shuddering spirit cast
A longing look far adown the past,
Wherein all life's time was ta'en,
Then lapsed in pain ;—

In agony !—for the soul did clutch
At its clayey tabernacle ;
Peering beyond, where the gloom was such
That annihilation seemed to touch
The soul, from each fleshly shackle
Shrived at the call ;

Then shivering into empty void,
Where Death himself seemed dead ;
Is the very God not here ? I cried,
As annihilation seemed to stride
On with me, in its dread
All silent tread.

O God, it was a blessedness
The angels cannot know !
My spirit swept on through the spiritless ;
It waded upward, till 'mid the press
Of the blessed ones, who their crowns all low
Before thee throw !

The happy ones of Heaven seemed moved,—
Methought their anthems dumb ;
A dweller in flesh, and all unproved,
Into the land of love, unloved
By yon thronéd One, from his home
Of earth had come.

Who wert thou, lovely one, that came
From out that startled host,
And named to me the holy name
The blessed ones give the Incarnate Lamb ;
Till fear in my soul, all terror-tossed,
Was in adoration lost ?

My Anne ! my child !—it was a dream of bliss ;
Bright angel thou art there !
In dreams might I foretaste such blessedness ;
Again all vainly struggle to express
What ye blest spirits share :—
Silent is my despair.

My babe, beloved one, didst thou come down
From inconceivable realities?
Wert thou permitted—with my young life strown
With thorns,—and thou so sweet a rose unblown,
The bitterest thorn—my closëd eyes
To ope on Paradise?

Away these tears, then! life is but the winding
Of the unreturning road :
Weeds tangle it, and pitfalls ; thy reminding,
My blessed one, me urges to the finding
Of resignation, till I leave this load,
And wake with God.

VI.

MY WITHERED FLOWER.

THE flowers o' the Simmer time,
A' in brown-leaf shrouds are lying ;
The nor' wind is swirling the driven snaw,
An' tossing the white flakes or e'er they fa',
To hide where a' lie a dying :—
But my flower is withered an' winna re-bloom !

The birks in the eerie glen
Their leafless boughs a' wide are tossing ;

The sough frae the upland forest seems
 As in wild faem a thousand mountain streams
 Frae rock to den were crossing ;—
 An' my flower is withered an' winna re-bloom.

The Spring maun return again,
 Opening the fresh buds o' ilka flower,
 Drappin' the gowans o'er strath an' lea ;
 Buskin' wi' blossom ilk bus an' tree ;
 Blessing a' nature wi' walth o' dower ;—
 But my flower is withered an' winna re-bloom,

Till aince this waefu' warld
 Its last flowers a' withered, its ways a' toom,
 An' nought for a lap to the lanesome dying,
 But the graves whar Death's latest plenish is lying,
 Steerin' to wake at the trump o' doom ;—
 Then my flower, though withered, shall again re-bloom !

VII.

WILD WEEDS.

THE storm is raving wild ;
 The snort of his charger's breath
 Booms along ; the flashing sheath
 Of the lightning by his side he beareth,
 Whose sheen through the low murk appeareth

As though it grimly smiled !
The trailing clouds on the horizon
Open, as though clenched teeth were shown ;
Then clash, and, ha ! the monster laughs,
Rattling down hail and dashing rain !
Hark, the welkin growls amain,
Re-laughing his laughter back again !
The ocean he lasheth to yeasty foam ;
Winding the navies in her wave,
And dandling them above the tomb
Where millions find an uncrowded grave !
He strippeth the trees of the yellow leaf,
And dasheth through the skeletons,
Tossing and smashing till their groans
Wail like tormented souls, whose grief
Seeks, in complaining, vain relief.

The silly cattle are fleeing fast,
Cowering beneath the brawny oak
That invites the shivering lightning's stroke :
The ploughboy from under his horny hand
Peereth along the scene, aghast ;
Then urgeth his team o'er the furrowed land ;
And, plunging through the raving brook,
Longeth for the ingle-nook
Where the old white-haired villager,
With the timid youngsters cowering near,
Pauseth, at every flash, in his tale

Of the wilder storms he hath known,
When he yoked the team, and plied the flail,
In the young days long gone :
The wee birds cower among the trees ;
And misery's homeless child,
Shivering in tatters on the wild,—
Sin's bitter heritage,—
Wild youth's bequest to age,—
Perchance e'en now, all friendless, drees :—

And thou, my babe, that slept
So warmly sheltered on thy mother's breast,
My gentle one, so fondly kept
Within a mother's arms, in rest,
Guarded by love ;—
Dost thou more stilly sleep
With the cold sheet of earth above,
In thy cradle so narrow and deep ?

Alas ! alas ! the ploughboy will return
And whistle o'er the furrows with his team ;
The drumly torrents of the roaring burn
Change to a brawling, silver stream ;
Bright things return with Spring,
But thou, my bright, my lovely one,
Of thee, what doth it bring,
But a new blossom to the weed hath grown
Above thy grave, unsown !

VIII.

A DAISY PLUCKED FROM HIS GRAVE.

O FEARLESS rider, how strong was our faith
In those old young days of yore ;
Yet the courser's goal was the river of Death,
Fellow-rider, so soon passed o'er ;
The fire is ashes on the old hearth :
Ashes to ashes ; earth to earth !

O careless hearts, how gay were life's gleams !
How glorious lay all beyond !
O brothers of hope, young dreamers of dreams,
How each sanguine heart did bound !
All dreamless now ; yet how blest to lie
Where the daisies look up to their native sky,
And ashes that glowed on the dear old hearth
Thus rekindle to life from their native earth,
In a coverlet-turf star-crowned !

IX.

THE LAUREL.

J. M. R., APRIL 9, 1844.

“ God be with thee,” I did say ;
But he gently answered, “ Rather

I would be with God my Father :
 Bleakly dawns earth's brightest day ;
 Oh, I long to win my manumission, and to be away.

“From this earth to be away,
 How my weary spirit panteth !
 Fleshly tenure spirit daunteth ;
 Soul to dust doth answer, Nay !
 Oh, to be unclothed from this clammy robe of clay !”

“But thy battle-field's before thee ;
 Thou art only yet in training :
 Arm'd now go forth for gaining
 In some fair field victory ;
 Laurels thou shalt win and wear triumphantly !”

On the wreath he turned to gaze ;
 Passed a finger o'er each leaf,
 Then said, “Its losing costs small grief ;
 The amaranth, methinks, its worth outweighs ;
 It feeleth me but cold, this earthly meed of praise !

“Besides, it seemeth me scarce meet,
 Each soldier wrangling for some crown ;
 Sufficeth it, one Captain of renown,
 Treading our foemen beneath conquering feet,
 Hath won for us the wreath, and for ourselves doth
 wait.

“ It were indeed a noble ministration
 Of such a Conqueror to sing,
 Whose glory consecrated suffering,
 Whose conquest is our earnest of salvation,
 Whose suffering was itself a world-won consecration.

“ But here I vainly seek to sing :
 Methinks there doth beseem to me
 Needed an atmosphere of purity
 Whereto no breath of earthliness shall cling,
 Wherein the spirit can endure for ever on the wing.”

* * * *

Ay, too-late valued friend !
 Even then seen, like a sun,
 Dimly, through impure mists that run
 Upon the course, that to pure noon doth tend ;
 Thou, toward a cloudless day, on willing wing didst wend.

Yet not all mute he went ;
 Some broken strains were given,
 Prelude to the unbroken ones in Heaven
 He singeth now ;— pure, heaven-significant ;
 Ah, how surpassing now his song of adoration jubilant !

This done, he turned and eyed
 The spread feast of world-blandishment,
 Then said, “ To go from thee I’m well content ;

Time's things perchance may charm when purified." And so, in smiling sweet farewells to all, he died :

Quitting earth's hopes, to be,
As was his better choice, the rather
With God ; and so found grace to weather
Bravely Time's shallow shoals ; into the sea
Of his God's infinite love, sweeping triumphantly.

X.

LOVE'S WITHERED WREATH.

STRETCHED all his length upon a sunny bank,
A youth lay plucking at the flowers around ;
The which he flung about in childish prank
Until half buried in the flowery mound,
Whose odorous blossoms littered all the ground ;
And then in wayward mirth he strove amain,
All laughingly, the leaves to gather up again.

Then sitting down with staid and serious face,
He set himself to twine a rosy wreath ;
Yet still inconstantly would join the chase
If chanced a butterfly to cross the heath ;
Yet back would laughing come, all out of breath,
And set himself to task, with serious air,
His wreathëd coronal of flowers to weave and wear.

And so time wended with the merry boy,
All through the changes of a summer's day ;
Yet seemed the lonely revel not to cloy,
But still by fits he laughed and fell to play,
Then gravely platted at the flowers away,
Until, alternate daisy, brier, and heath,
He to a garland wove, and crowned himself therewith.

Whereat he rose, and looked about him then,
Spying the lengthening shadows of the eve,
And seemed as one unconsciously o'erta'en ;
And gathering up a bow and arrow sheaf,
That lay half buried beneath flower and leaf,
He turned him toward the sun's declining light,
And spread, in haste, his wings, prepared for home-
ward flight.

Then first, all stern and stark, there met his eye
An aged man, that had been looking on ;
At sight of whom he gazed full tristfully,
And snatched it off, and strove to hide his crown ;
Whereat Death sternly claimed it for his own :
“ Earth's flowers are mine ! ” he said ; “ even Love's
own wreath
Fades to a royal garland for the brow of Death ! ”

Upon whose touch, the wreath, as struck by blight,
Dropped from his hand, all withered to the ground :

Which Love picked up, and, weeping at the sight,
He smoothed the shrivelled leaves, and waved it
round ;
Then clasped it to his breast, and, with a bound,
Sprang from the earth, and, soaring, heavenward flew ;
While the dead leaves distilled such fragrant dew,
That all the air was filled with odours they out threw.

XL.

MY DAISY.

ON RECOVERY FROM ILLNESS.

ONCE more thy merry laugh, dear child,
Thy mirth and romping glee,
Burst out, as sunshine that hath smiled
Through Spring clouds, tearfully ;
But all the brighter for the gloom
That to such sunny smile makes room.

Sport in thy pretty ways again,
My little bounding fawn,
Upon the parlour's checkered plain,
Thy party-coloured lawn ;
Thou little reck'st the depths of fear
Thy smile hath made to disappear.

The music of that gentle voice,
The prattle of thy tongue,

Sweeter than when Spring's melodies
 Awake the woods to song ;
And, like thy lisping numbers, ope
Life's season, with the voice of hope.

Young dream of life, a mother's love
 Guards thee with tenderest care ;
Sleep on her breast, my little dove,
 Safe in love's shelter there ;
Sleep out thy little span of hope,
Life's cares too soon thine eyes will ope.

And thou shalt grow, as years roll on ;
 And childhood's winning ways,
And youth's simplicity disown,
 In all their guileless maze :
Till in thy glass approving seen,
A stately lady of sixteen !

With look demure, and eye askance,
 And curtsy dropt with courtliest air ;
Still singling out with ready glance
 Some model high and debonair ;
And scolding down thy merry heart
To play the formal woman's part.

Yet all in vain ;—the task, I ween,
 Will baffle all thy girlish art,

While still in every glance is seen
Reflected back thy mother's heart ;
The playful gentleness and love
That round home's hearth unchanging move.

Until, perchance, old Time brings round
The hour that thou and I must part ;
When, like thy mother, thou hast found
A dearer than thy father's heart ;—
A truer love thou'l never know :
Yet Love will call, and thou must go !

But truce to dreams of such a date,
Thy doll is care enough for thee ;
And puss, thine arch and playful mate,
Dogging thy footsteps playfully,
Then bounding from thy outstretched wand,
The fittest suitor for thy hand.

Play on together, happy pair,
In arch simplicity and mirth ;
Alas ! that joy so light and rare
Should be so fleet a guest on earth ;
And things so fashioned to allure—
Should change to maids and cats demure !

XII.

THE EXOTIC.

(For Music.)

WINTER departs, nor long in vain
Shall slumber seal the flow'ret's eye ;
Glad Summer comes, and o'er the grain
The zephyrs soon shall lightly fly ;
But Winter goes, and Summer comes in vain
To heal the anguish of the exile's pain.

Winter departs, and in his train
The gloomy shadows of the year ;
And Summer, tripping o'er the plain,
Brings plenty with the ripening ear :
But memory, lingering o'er the buried past,
Chills in its wintry shadow to the last.

O land of exile, lull to sleep
The breeze that frets thy moaning pine ;
Hush ! let me hear yon free winds sweep,
Far fatherland, from groves of thine,
Where Summer round the old home lingering plays,
And Winter bids its hearth more warmly blaze.

Winter returns, and still in vain
Must hope deferred in sickness pine ;

For never more shall Winter wane
Or Summer smile on home of mine:
Blow, wintry dirges; through your pine-boughs rave;
Strew with your withering leaves the exile's grave.





A Fly Crushed in my Scrap-Book.



UT of a hundred thousand million flies
It chances that this one,
On this white page, here prone at last, thus
lies,
Life's mummied shadow, thrown.

Here in this mausoleum of odd scraps
I mean to let him lie ;
In sepulchre as decent as, perhaps,
Ere chanced a common fly.

And thus his epitaph in brief I pen :—
“ Here lies a mean house-fly :
Was born, passed through the common lot, and then
Here 'twas his fate to die.

“ He ate, he drank the best, like I or you,
Whene'er he had a choice ;

And then this thoughtless fly, life's summer through
. Just buzzed and made a noise.

“ What else he e'er accomplished, I don't know;
What useful purpose here;
What end or aim his life-work had to show,
Does nowhere now appear.

“ So wherefore such a thing of wondrous art
Was fashioned thus so well,
To sport one summer through life's little part,
I'm sure I cannot tell.

“ But if it had no purpose to achieve,
So far as one can see;
The very same is true of many a knave,—
Perchance of you or me.”

—





A Dead Gnat.



STRANGE work of art ! mysterious speck !
Once frame-work of a living spirit,
From God's own hand that did inherit
That life of which this is the wreck.

A finger's touch sufficed to change
Gay life into this mummied nothing,
And death—that thing of mortal loathing,—
Epitomised in guise so strange.

Man's handiwork, this curious blot,
The handiwork divine undoing ;
A wreck to which that life renewing
Surpasses even human thought.

Yet Death with touch as slight undoes
This human life of tears and laughter ;
And what were man with no hereafter
But such a gnat to sting and buzz !



The Critic Dragon and the Author Moth.

Author Moth.



YOU villainous spit-fire, what do you mean,
With your venom and insolent bluster?
With your ugly mug and your eye so green,
As of spite and jealousy gotten between,—
 You put me quite in a fluster.

Critic Dragon.

You presumptuous, scribbling, pretentious puff,
With your barren conceit of invention;
As if I did not know the sort of stuff
. That authors are made of well enough:
 You bubble of brain-froth's distention!

Author Moth.

Pray how can you know what we authors are?
Born of heaven's cerulean ether;

Each to bask in its fathomless depths a star,
And ray forth his scintillations afar,—
O world! O time! they know whither!

Critic Dragon.

They know whither?—Of course they do; and I too!
Did I never star it myself?
You pitiful oaf of an authorling, know
That the critical dragon is but the full blow
Of an author laid past on the shelf!





April Fooling.



HEN old Father Time, one April day,
As all the world knows, fell a napping,
Fun and Frolic by chance found him out as
he lay,
And on his bald head, for a capping,
Whipt a fool's-cap and bells, that in jingling awoke
The busy old soul from dreaming
He had given Methuselah's jaw a poke,
And his first rotten tooth was claiming.
But the sober wight,
Now in merry plight,
Though he does not indulge idle days oft,
Took his glass from its stand,
Shook from it the sand,
In a trice put some froth in the place of 't;
Held the glass to his mouth,
And blew north and south,

Till the wide earth ran wild in the chase of 't.
Still as Fun caught a few
Of the bubbles he blew,
She tossed them, and set the world after ;
And the poking and racing,
The knocking and chasing,
Since have served her and Frolic for laughter.

Of all the bubbles then were blown
'Twere tedious the narration ;
But just to single out, for one,
There's the bubble Reputation !
They crowd pell-mell
Up Fame's steep hill,
And scramble each for station,
Gulping the bubble from its rill,
Then sputter with vexation.

The froth another bubble blew
From old Time's soporism ;
In whose pursuit a motley crew
In chorus raised the view-halloo,—
The bubble Criticism !
Still as they chase, the crowd increases,—
A rare assortment of odd faces :
The purchaser of musty missal
In wild pursuit now seems to pass all ;

While hard behind, with nimble long limb,
See Van Daub's patron gaining on him
Nor lags the genuine antiquary,
 When once its worth awoke to,
Who, O rare gem ! from Lethe's quarry
 Has rescued Noah's cork-screw !
The owner likewise of Eve's glass,
Hairs from the tail of Balaam's ass,
A primer that King David's was,
 And Solomon's school-book too !
“ But, mark ! ” cries Fun to Frolic, “ yonder,
Just as the bubble turns the corner,
A hero, armed with quill for lance,
And fitly mounted for the nonce,
Spurs on his goose to join the fray,
And bears the glittering prize away ! ”

But, not to wear your patience out,
 ‘Tis said that Love's a bell too,
Thrown up by Fun to raise the rout
 That in pursuit then fell to.
But this an error is, no doubt,
By jilted cynic given out,
 As such poor elf might well do.
Cerulean as the azure heaven,
To phantom bubble has been given
 Love's own celestial hue ;

With roseate tint and pearly gleam,
That made the gausy semblance seem
An orb of Heaven's own dew.
Deceived, beguiled, the hapless wight
Has wasted many a weary day,
And many a wearier night ;
While wicked Fun found huge delight,
And Frolic sport and play :
Like Æsop's boys when pelting frogs,
With little thought, the jolly dogs,
Of all their cruel affray.
For, sooth to say, though frolic 'tis
To cozen with Love's promised bliss,
And lap man in its dream ;
Of all the bubbles reckless Time
From Life's alembic lets sublime,
'Tis likest death to him.

Besides such ills, were found among
The drowsy carle's last bubbles
A long array, at random strung,
To fit the gay with troubles.
The busy idler, now content,
Turning Life's Carnival to Lent,
May prove himself most wretched ;
Nor fancied trouble need invent,
When Fun is by to fetch it.

Then from her gilded bubbles choose
The gaudiest you can borrow ;
But this my rhyme
Must tell, that Time
Sobered awoke the morrow ;
Refilled his glass ; resumed his watch ;
And made, for those his bubbles catch,
A double tide of sorrow !





Modern Fashions.

IMPROPTU.



LIFE'S a bubble Death is breaking;
Earth's a nut that Time will crack;
He is his siesta taking
On the whirlwind's fleeting wrack:
But, believe me, lady fair,
Though the breath its breezes wear
Seems so bland, old Time is there;
Rested, he'll be swiftly back.

Death, most courteously discarding
Black-sweat, plague, and such old hacks.
His quietus is awarding
With the skill of modern quacks;
March-of-intellect made wise,
Time his curricle supplies
With steam-engines tandem-ways,—
All the closer at our backs!



A Dream.



HE prince of snails ! he dreamt a dream
As subtle as any attorney.
But what it was about
You had better find out :
You have dreamt such a dream yourself no
doubt,
And fancied you put the whole world to rout.
He spurned the stars, he scared the sea,
He frightened the earth and the air, in his glee ;
He won all he had ever wished to be,—
And then, waking, he solved the mystery.
He had slept ; and his high-mettled charger-snail,
Setting off with a speed very like a whale,
Had made quarter an inch of a journey !





Parting Introduction

TO A MANUSCRIPT VOLUME OF VERSE.



IFE plies her busy pen ; unceasing fills
Her varied page with rich emblazonment ;
Her softest pencillings she invigorates
With boldest touch, then dashes o'er the whole,
And blots the leaves with pencil dipt in gloom.

Oft she begins a chapter, then, ere scarce
The heading has been writ, it is erased ;
Her page invites the student to peruse,
Then changes while his interest's at its height,
Nor e'er returns. The motley interweaves
Its racy jest with grave and saddest thoughts ;
Smiles oft relax to tears ; and deepest grief,
The anguish of unutterable woe,
Jostles with laughter ; till the noisy mirth
Is drowned again in weeping. Thus she plies
Her busy pen ; and ever and anon

She drops her scattered leaves unwittingly ;
Which Death picks up, and binds into a book,
Then seals, and writes his superscription there.
But where her title-page ? It stands not there,
Upon the brow of infant innocence ;
It offers not in gay and joyous youth,
Maturer manhood, or the waning eld.
The stone, that tells of virtues never known,—
O'er which the sculptured tears of sorrow fall,
And mock the ashes, save by them unwept,—
Keeps not a sterner silence as to crimes,
Than dawning life of that which is to come.
Could the fond mother, for her infant boy,
Trace out the index of his future years,
Unwise they might be, uncongenial to
The just designs of his Creator's will ;
But, oh, how many a chapter would be changed !
How many a varied incident erased,
And superseded by the golden tints
Of fond desire ! Life's title-page is writ
In the revolving year, the changing sky,
The ever-varying forest, and the flood ;
All tell of change, a never-resting change,—
Alas ! too oft they speak in notes of woe.
A Spring alternating in smiles and tears
Ushers the Summer in ; its brief bright hours
Wane into Autumn ; and its changing hues
Perish in Winter's sterile, cheerless blasts.

And where Life's contents? Seek them in the grave.
Life has been striving for six thousand years,
And what has she produced? Still as she sows,
The grisly monster stands with sickle by,
He reaps and gathers in; and mouldering heaps,
The silent dust, the kindred earth we tread,
Tell more of life, by infinite account,
Than living man. Yet still the joyous sounds
Of revelry and mirth are heard betimes.
We've viewed our fathers' sepulchres so long,
We sport around them, heedless of the sight;
And thoughtless youth finds mirth in ridicule
Even of the halt decrepitude of eld,
To be himself again, ere long, the butt
For others' jests.

But you admonish me,
Most gentle reader, nor in truth untimed,
My task should be to make mine own the theme,
And not the checkered volume Life has penned;
To introduce the pages you peruse,
In courtly phrase, not lecture you the while.
'Tis pertinent; and yet, in sooth, good friend,
Pardon the writer if he must confess
His aim has been his pleasure, more than yours.
Life in his own experience hath proved
No mask for pleasure-keeping holiday,
But earnest warfare, with keen weapons waged;
And if he hath beguiled it of a care,

The weight of thy displeasure may be borne.
To please all readers was as little wished
As hoped ; some with a kind and friendly gaze
At its contents, will close the book and smile,
Not at the author's wit, but at himself ;
While others, opening it with careless glance,
May read with interest, and return again
To seek new pleasure in the motley page.
Even as the postman's varied budget brings
Pleasure to many, hope deferred to some,
And deepest anguish at some time to all.
We take the folded sheet, and eye the seal,
Turning it every way in hope to find
Clew to the author there ; then baffled turn
And view again the superscription traced
In no remembered hand ; till having thus
Puzzled and wondered, hoped and feared in vain,
We break the seal, and find, what had been found
As easily at first, and what perchance
May seem but dearly purchased by the toil.
Even so, these pages may excite desire
To open and peruse the mixed contents
The volume yields : till gratified, they deem
The labour lost. But, reader, you perchance
Would hint the Introduction's somewhat long ;
Yet I would fain have far too high esteem
For any reader of a work of mine
Meant but for friends, than think that they would hold

Communion, save by introduction meet.
True you may gain good company without ;
The Arch-Fiend went to Paradise incog.,
Nor needed introduction there, to spoil
The truest bliss by man or angel known :
Yet Satan haply fared not aye so well,
As holy legend tells. St. Dominic,
The patron saint of Inquisitions, sat
Conning the pages of some holy tome—
Unless his thoughts still saintlier themes engaged,
Devising tortures for arch-heretics—
When straight appeared the Fiend before his eye.
Not wrapped in sulph'rous flames, but in disguise
Of humblest Flea, he skipped across the page,
Doubtless, with dev'lish malice, to arrest
The father's most benevolent designs ;
But well he recognized, through strange disguise,
Nor failed to punish the intruding Fiend.
From page to page, throughout the ponderous tome,
The holy father,—leave nor asked nor given,—
Used this Arch-Flea to note, as he progressed,
Each pause. When holy meditation fixed
His upturned eye, straight the unwilling Fiend
Stood where he left, nor moved, until again
Progressive meditation dragged him on.
The ponderous volume closed, transfix'd he lay
In atmosphere abhorrent, till at length
St. Dominic, his studies having done,

Unbound, and let repentant Satan flee.
His fate demands your thought, this lesson gives:—
Eschew, unintroduced, the tempting page;
Worth comes not always with the fairest show;
Nor Beelzebub alone hath glanced upon
An open page, with swift intent to leave,
Yet lingered on, enchain'd, until the close.
Or should some witty reader rather think
The Flea himself best emblem of my rhymes,—
Doubtless!—and yet the saintly record hints
Huge mischief, as perchance some little good,
May find full compass in the pettiest form.

It happened, when the world was in its prime,
Young Truth, then deemed a fair and comely boy,—
Although the prescience of our wiser times
Dub him Plain Truth, a starched old gentleman,
Somewhat precise and sour, if all be told,
Nor complaisant, though with some sterling parts
To those who care to court his company!—
This same young Truth, enamoured of a maid
Called Beauty, wooed and won her for his bride;
Whence sprang a babe uniting either's charms,
Who grew up, lovely in immortal youth,
And still is known as Poesy Divine.
A protean youth, of infinite desire;
A soul of passionate purity and love,
And beauty flashing out through every guise:

Now robed in tragic weeds, veiled loveliness
Telling of woe that asks in vain for tears;
Anon exchanged for innocence of mirth:
Here treading stately measure to the swell
Of the deep organ's voice; there to the sound
Of the soft lute, breathing a lover's plaint
Into his mistress' ear; or with a song
Of mirthfulness forefending rheumy Care:
Till the dull world, so long despising him,
Begins to find some virtue in the boy:
The which no sooner known, some prater comes,
Tricked out in gaudy tinsel, cap and bells,
Jangling discordant measure as he halts
At every turn; announcing to the world
Some brat of his the twin of Poesy,
Himself forsooth the foster sire of both;
Until the age, grown sick of charlatans,
Turns a deaf ear to Poesy's own song.
Yet doth he own a many voicëd lute
Of varying power, as Beauty's self—no less:
Hath not the organ, that awakes a voice
In the cathedral's far receding aisles,
A lowlier note, to breathe the holy psalm
Responsive to untutored village choir?
While Painting, younger of the heavenly maids,
Owns as her own, Van Huysum or Ostade,
No less than Raphael, rapt in theme divine;
And Nature's self among her costlier charms,

The daisy and the blue forget-me-not,
Oft hymned so sweetly in the muse's ear :
So have I dared to hope, that Poesy,
Weighing huge folios 'gainst some homely song,
And scornfully disowning many a cheat
That apes the passions, strangers to his soul,
May condescend to own my lowly rhymes.

If earnest aspirations after good,
The passionate worship of an ardent soul
Striving to win the Beautiful and True,
Could give the claim to take the lowliest rank
Among "the God-like race"—then were it mine ;
And this, my verse, a Heaven-inspirèd song,
Exacting audience from a listless world.
But vain my song, poor echo to the sense
Of heavenly loveliness, that still eludes :
Charming me onward, in delusive chase,
Attracted by a beauty all divine,
I sec, and own, and worship, and would sing,
But that power fails me, and my shamèd lyre
Yields but a mockery of the lofty theme.
Yet hath it high reward ; though it may seem
Worthless to thee, to me it had a charm
That soothed the writer oft in saddest mood,
And added pleasure to some gayer hours ;
A pleasure critics cannot take away.
Nay ! fear not ! play the critic an thou list ;

I care not how thy merriment's produced,
So that, in all true friendship thou art pleased :
Perchance the gayest move thee not to smile,
Why then the graver may ! But if thy vein
Is rather, with a sharp and venomous tooth,
To find thy pleasure, torturing my poor verse,
Until it answer as thou list,—I ween
Thou hast full leave to break the Butterfly
Upon thy ponderous wheel ; as I now break,
With a stern sense of duty, this weak Lyre,
And give Life's Morrow to the fate she wills.









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